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BABYLON THE GREAT:

A DISSECTION AND DEMONSTRATION

OF MEN AND THINGS

IN

THE BRITISH CAPITAL.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"THE MODERN ATHENS."

Βαβυλὼν ἡ μεγάλη, ἡ μήτηρ τῶν πορνῶν καὶ βδελυγμάτων τῆς γῆς.

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BABYLON THE GREAT.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

——— LONDON! opulent, enlarged, and still
Increasing LONDON. COWPER.

THE literature of England, of Europe, of the world, at any place or for any time, contains not a page, a volume, or a book, so mighty in import or so magnificent in explanation, as the single word LONDON. That is the talisman which opens the book of Nature and of Nations, and sets before the observer the men of all countries and all ages, in respect both of what they are and what they have done. Whatever is profound in science, sublime in song, exquisite in art, skilful in manufacture,

daring in speculation, determined in freedom, rich in possession, comfortable in life, magnificent in style, or voluptuous in enjoyment, is to be found within the precincts of that great Babylon; and there too are to be found every meanness, every vice, and every crime, by which human nature can be debased and degraded.

Elsewhere one may contemplate a single feature or lineament of the great picture of man; but here they are all together and at once upon the canvass, singularly blended and even confounded together, but still strong, graphic, and perfect in all their peculiarities. The direct contemplation of this vast picture is, perhaps, too great a labour for any one man; and the details, if minutely given, would form a work from the perusal of which the most voracious reader would turn aside: and therefore a sketch, which shall exhibit the great features, physical and intellectual, must, with however light and hasty a pencil it is touched, be fraught with interest.

London may be considered, not merely as the capital of England or the British Empire, but as the metropolis of the world,—not merely as the seat of a Government which extends its connexions and exercises its influence to the remotest points of the earth's surface—not merely as it contains the wealth and the machinery by which the freedom

and the slavery of nations are bought and sold—not merely as the heart, by whose pulses the tides of intelligence, activity, and commerce, are made to circulate throughout every land—not merely as possessing a freedom of opinion, and a hardihood in the expression of that opinion, unknown to every other city—not merely as taking the lead in every informing science, and in every useful and embellishing art,—but as being foremost and without a rival in every means of aggrandisement and enjoyment, and also of neglect and misery—of every thing that can render life sweet and man happy, or that can render life bitter and man wretched.

Considered by itself, and without reference to the power and influence of that Government of which it is the chief locality, or of the extended ramifications of those people of which it forms the connecting link, it is a great nation in respect of the numbers of its people, and a mighty one when their wealth, their intelligence, their concentration, and the prompt and immediate use to which all of them can apply their talents, are taken into the account. Within a circumference, the radius of which does not exceed five miles, there are never fewer than a million and a half of human beings; and if the great bell of St. Paul's were swung to the full pitch of its tocsin sound, more ears would hear it than could hear the loudest roaring of Etna or Vesuvius,—

or, indeed, the mightiest elemental crash that could happen at any other spot upon the earth's surface; and if one were to take one's station in the ball or the upper gallery of that great edifice, the wide horizon, crowded as it is with men and their dwellings, would form a panorama of industry and of life, more astonishing than could be gazed upon from any other point. In the streets immediately below one, the congregated multitude of men, of animals, and of machines, diminished as they are by the distance, appear like streams of living atoms reeling to and fro; and, as they are lost in the vapoury distances, rendered murky by the smoke of a million fires, the sublime but sad thought of the clashing and careering streams of life hurrying to and losing themselves in the impervious gloom of eternity, starts across the mind. Nor is the contemplation of the marvels of man's making, which that horizon displays, less wonderful than the multitudes and the movements of the men themselves. It seems as if the wand of an enchanter had been stretched out, or the fiat of a creating Divinity had gone forth over every foot of the land and of the waters. To-day one may discover a line of hovels; a month passes, and there is a rank of palaces. Now, the eye may haply light upon a few spots of that delicious green which is the native vesture of Old England; but, ere the moon has exhibited all

the phases of her brief circle of change, the earth shall have been moulded into abodes for the ever-accumulating multitude. House after house, palace after palace, street after street, and square after square—it stretches on and on, till the eye fails in catching its termination, and the fancy easily pictures it as every where gliding into the infinitude of space.

Throughout this mighty mass of human erection, a fabric more gay, durable, and commanding than the rest, is ever and anon presenting itself to the eye, and telling to the mind its story of the old, or its deed of the present time. The cumbrous and gloomy masses of the Tower, with their tarnished walls and their mud-choked ditch, speak alike of crimes that have been perpetrated, of glories that have passed away, and of new grandeurs and new usages that have arisen. There, the once gorgeous halls, in which Kings issued their mandates and nobles bowed the knee, are now converted into store-houses for those warlike instruments which England wields with such power and success, when justice, or vengeance, or pride, or folly, or any of the other incentives to national strife, calls her to the battle-field; in those vaults, in which Royal captives have been confined, and where the blood of Kings has wetted the knife of the assassin, pieces of ordnance peacefully cumber the floor, or the

walls ring with neglected bucklers, and cast-off cuirasses; and those courts which once were grand with the chivalry of England, and graced with all the beauty of her loftiest dames, are now abandoned to the loitering yeoman or the solitary sentinel. Those neighbouring streets too, in which once stood the choicest abodes of the gay and the fashionable, are now given up to the humblest of the people. Every where, in short, in and about this ancient abode of Royal state, neglect has taken place of admiration, vulgar industry has come in the room of Courtly sport, and in many instances squalour has usurped the old inheritance of splendour. Even here, however, there is a lesson which is cheering as well as moral: the place where plots were aforetime hatched, as well against the safety of the Kings of England, as against the liberties and lives of their subjects—where patriotism has been immured from the light of the sun—and where blood too pure and ardent in its love of man for the age has been spilt, is now devoted to the peaceful, the exhilarating, and the enriching labours of commerce. Royalty has sped westward; all that is called fashionable in life has followed; but old Father Thames still sweeps along by the Tower, and the burden of his every wave is provision to a thousand of the human race. The great may shift their places of abode, and alter the forms of their observances;

but wherever nature places the grand elements of utility, thither will mankind throng and prosper.

In another place, the bustling square of the Exchange opens its four-fold gates, and admits to its wide area, or its spacious piazzas, the enterprising of every nation in the world. Here the Jew and the Christian, the Mahometan and the Kaffre, the dweller amid Lapland snows, and he upon whose infancy the sun darted his hottest perpendicular ray—the olive man of the East, the red man of the West, the black man of the South, and the white man of the North—all mingle in mutual intercourse, and rack their inventions and their powers as to who shall derive the chief advantage. Here is an epitome of all the nations of the world, and of all the passions of man. Eagerness sparkles in every eye—cunning grins on every lip, and every screwed and anxious form seems to proclaim, that if the owner is not to over-reach all the rest, the fault will be none of his. The figure of the gilded grasshopper, which floats over the whole, is no bad emblem of the disparity that there is between the studiedly sober and suave faces of the traffickers, and the deep and cunning machinery which is at work within. The emblem speaks of mere sport, song, and frisking in the summer sun; but that over which it rises is the council-chamber of Plutus,—the place where there is no god but money, and

no enjoyment but in the adding of one gain to another.

Not far from this again,

"—— London's Column, pointing to the skies,
Like a tall bully, lifts its head, and lies;"

and also tells the truth,—tells that the most destructive conflagration that ever gave to a city the means of improvement, after that city had been built to a great extent, thronged with people, and abundant in wealth, produced no improvement at all; but that new city was made more gloomy and chearless than the old, inasmuch as the buildings were made higher, while the streets were not increased in breadth. It tells another, though a minor truth: it points out that one of the noblest specimens of merely ornamental architecture, is placed where it can ornament nothing, and where it is itself disgraced; for what congruity is there between a Doric column and a dealer in sailors' jackets, or between a sculptured base and a chandler's shop? Architectural ornaments, like the ornaments of dress, are seemly only when they are in their proper places; and this column standing in Monument Yard, is in about as good taste and keeping, as a brilliant star would be upon the frock of a worker among "black diamonds."

Westward, high above all the neighbouring buildings in grandeur as well as fame, rises the Abbey

of St. Peter's, Westminster; the solid majesty of whose massy walls and heavy towers would impart to it a high degree of interest, even though the sight of it awoke no contemplation. But to this place, or to its immediate vicinity, the most intense excitement of every Englishman is directed. Hard by are the Courts of Law and the High Courts of Parliament, for the regulation of the private and public affairs of the kingdom. It is there that decisions affecting the fortunes of men and the fate of nations, are pronounced; and thence the inhabitants of London, of England, and of the world, derive the most exciting topics of their conversation. Nor can a Briton, or even a stranger, look towards the Abbey itself without a mixture of excitements, among which majesty, and melancholy, and exultation, are singularly blended. It is true, that the Abbey has ceased to be the depository of those mummeries, which constituted its chief interest during dark, ignorant, and monkish times. It is true, that the modern visitor would look in vain for that *lacte Virginis*, which retained its freshness and fluidity during ten centuries and a half,—it is true, that the blade-bone of St. Benedict, the finger of St. Alphage, the head of St. Maxilla, and half the jaw-bone of St. Anastasia, have gone to a place with less monument or memorial than the "tomb of all the Capulets;" but still there are relics there,—

relics which will last and be revered while England is England, and while genius is dear to man. It is true, that not many of the perishable ashes of the illustrious dead are here gathered together as in a common charnel-house,—it is true, that here there can be little of the idle foolery of garnishing monuments, or watering graves, by those who will not emulate the deeds of them whose remains are within; but it is true, there here are to be found, as it were, the disembodied, intellectual, and immortal remains of some of England's most exalted sons. No doubt those master-spirits are mingled with others, of whom all but the chiselled stones and presumptuous inscriptions have perished; and who, to a careless observer, seem strangely out of place among the illustrious: but there is one advantage even here—a moral justice and retribution, which terribly degrade presumption, and as proudly elevate worth:—there is that force of contrast, which says to him whose talents or whose virtues will not preserve, that not all the blandishments of rank, not all the bounties of fortune, not all the adulation of flatterers, and not all the solicitude of friends, can preserve the memory of him, who has not, by the skill of his own head, or the strength of his own arm, written his own epitaph elsewhere than in the most magnificent "place of skulls" that ever was

consecrated and kept sacred. Many temporary and local circumstances may tend to bring within such a place those who should not be there, and to exclude those who should; but Time, who levels all the merely mortal distinctions of men, corrects and renders conspicuous all those which are mental.

From Westminster the eye glides imperceptibly toward the present dwellings of Royalty; and as it does so, the fancy steals back to moralize upon the Tower; and a lesson of humility, as painful as it is profitable, makes one sicken of this view, and look for objects which, along with less of majesty, have less of melancholy. But throughout the whole extent there are so many objects of interest, the tales which they tell are so numerous, and the lessons which they teach so fraught with reflection, that he who would contemplate the moral panorama even of external London, would require to devote days and months to the study. The casual observer looks this way and that, utters an exclamation or two at the vastness of what he sees, descends, returns to his home, and the chief impression that remains on his mind is,—that he has been upon the top of St. Paul's.

But still, if the love of moralizing, or even the common reflection of man, shall happen to come upon him who stands upon this airy height, and

views the magnificence, the bustle, and the confusion of the great Babylon beneath and around him, there is one subject that he cannot easily overlook; and that is,—Where have gone those countless multitudes, which, during hundreds of years, and, for aught that history tells to the contrary, during hundreds of ages, succeeded one another in this most wonderful of cities? He will look to the places of their residence,—little lowly spots of dull earth, scattered here and there, and deformed by a few crumbling stones, the inscriptions upon which men are forgetting, or have forgotten; and he will remark the vast difference that there is between the stir and bustle and pretence of one generation of living men, and the stilly silence and unobtruding humility of a thousand generations that are now in the dust. He will think of the atoms of once-animated clay, that must be scattered through and mingled with every thing in such a place: and he cannot refrain from imagining that the present inhabitants of London trample upon the bodies of their ancestors in the streets, and tenant them in the houses. When the merchant trudges through the mire from his warehouse to his banker's, or from his counting-house to 'Change, one component part of the mire that cleaves to his boots may be the substance of a merchant of the olden time, who was as keen in the pursuit, and as

comfortable in the enjoyment of wealth as himself. The foot of the barrister, as he runs from Court to Court, may fall upon part of the tongue of him after whom he copies his eloquence—the chariot-wheel of the peer may roll over the head of the peer who preceded him—the mud which soils the slipper of the present beauty, may have bloomed in the cheek of one as fair and as fascinating—and the walls of the apartment where aldermen dine, may be plastered with those who in their time dined as copiously and with as fond a zest. The train of speculation which this single thought opens up, runs into channels into which feeling will not look, and which fancy fears to imagine; and London seems as wonderful in the multitudes which it has lost, as in those which it displays in every shade of station, of conduct, and of character.

The most distinguishing circumstance about London, and the one in which it differs from every other place, is the universality of its character. In its confusion of tongues, of people, and of employments, it is Babylon; and in all its attributes it is "*Babylon the Great.*" Those who substitute names for ideas, and try to conceal in a sound their ignorance of a subject, say that it is inhabited by one race of people, whom they are pleased to denominate "Cockneys," and who have all the same habits, peculiarities, and tastes, and

all speak the same language. But, who are they to whom this name is given? Are they Englishmen, are they Scotsmen, are they Irishmen, or are they foreigners? What is their rank in life? Are they labourers, or artisans, or artists, or authors, or philosophers, or merchants, or nobles, or kings? Do they crowd together in narrow lanes and blind alleys, or have they their abodes in sumptuous palaces? Do they plunge into every vice that can degrade the human character, or do they practise every virtue by which that character can be adorned?—They must be, and they must do, all these; for all these, in more shades of difference than can be enumerated, go to swell the confusion of Babylon the Great.

Their language again,—is it the corrupt jargon of the mob, the slang of blackguards, the sense of men, or the simpering of fops?—Is it English with the accent of Wapping, of Spitalfields, or of the West End of the Town?—Is it English with a provincial accent, with a foreign accent, or with that want of all peculiarity which distinguishes well-educated and well-bred persons in every place; or is it the English language at all? And as for the taste,—whether is it that which characterises Rosemary Lane or New Bond Street,—that which shapes half a rood of ground into zodiacs before a tradesman's box, or cherishes groves of beautiful

exotics, or forests of spreading trees, in the noble demesnes of the rich and the elegant?

The truth is, that it is not any one of these; it is the whole of them united: and when any one ventures to describe London by a limited range of circumstances, he merely describes that by the abstraction of which London would scarcely be diminished. When, again, one asks for a character of London, it is necessary to ask, "Which London do you mean?" For if the characters be taken from the appearance of the town, or the manners and employments of the people, then there are many Londons. If the banks of the Thames below London Bridge, with a considerable number of the proximate streets on both sides of the River, are to be considered as London,—then London is a seaport town, very remarkable for its activity and its ugliness; and the people who are found there partake of nearly the same character, and follow nearly the same occupations, as those who inhabit similar places any where throughout the island. Or, if there be any thing peculiar to this maritime division of the Metropolis, it is that it has a more Babylonish character, from the greater throng of foreigners, and the greater admixture of foreign languages.—If the banks of the River above the Bridge, and especially that on the Surrey side, be taken; then London is a place of smoking furnaces,

dinsome engines, and great manufactories: if Spitalfields and Moorfields be taken, London is a manufacturing town, having all the activity, and much of the leanness and misery, that characterises such places: if Doctors' Commons, then one might imagine that the whole business of life were marriage and divorce: if the estimate be taken from that extensive range of Courts and Chambers, which stretches from the Temple Terrace to Gray's Inn Lane, then London is an accumulation of Lawyers, and the fictions and fightings of John Doe and Richard Roe, are employment, food, and clothing. Then come the Hundreds of Drury, the flowers of Covent Garden, and the promised land of St. Giles's; and if the character of London were to be taken from these, it would be various and vagabond—Babel, in the loudness and incomprehensibility of its din,—but not Babylon in any of the attributes of real grandeur. London, sketched after Pall-Mall, St. James's, and St. James's Square, would be the combined abode of royalty and of ruin—the dwelling of monarchs and the locality of "Hells;" and if one were to speak of it from the ample streets and squares which are marked off by Piccadilly on the South, and Regent Street on the East, then London would be the chosen and exclusive resort of genteel society.

Thus, in its topographical distribution, London

is any thing which you choose to call it; and if you would mention the description or employment of the people among whom you would wish to live, one could lay one's finger upon the map and say, "There shall be your residence;" for among the ten thousand squares and streets, and lanes and courts, which lodge its varied inhabitants, it is impossible not to find one where your neighbours shall be your equals,—similar in employments, in habits, and in tastes, and marked by the same graces or by the same deformities. Be you ever so elegant, you are sure to be equalled, if not eclipsed; be you ever so low, so debauched or dissipated, you will find others who can plunge as deep and become as foul as yourself. If you love social gaiety, all the elements of enjoyment are within your reach; and if you love retirement, you may be as recluse and solitary as though you were in a desert. Notwithstanding the crowds by whom you must every day be elbowed, you may pass through them as unheeded as you would be by the trees of a forest or the billows of the ocean; and though in one vigorous day's journey you might encompass nearly fifteen hundred thousand human beings, yet it might be possible for you to spend your whole life among them without any of them so much as asking your name. When you

meet a human face in a solitary wild or a secluded village, it becomes to you an object of interest; it possesses all the charms of rarity, and the social principle within you, which makes your fondest thoughts turn toward your fellows, prompts you to know the name, scan the history, and cultivate the acquaintance, of whomsoever you meet. But, in the crowds of London, individual man is lost in the mass;—the small fraction which one person forms can scarcely be reckoned by the nicest arithmetic; and therefore, though you wonder at the mass, you pass by the individuals, unless something peculiarly splendid, gaudy, or fantastical, commands a momentary attention.

This vast multitude and endless variety, together with the undisturbed quietude in which one may contemplate the whole, form the principal charms of London to a contemplative mind, and take off the pain of *ennui* from even the most listless. In London there is no such thing as private scandal,—no *coteries* that sit in judgment upon a man's private conduct, and no busy critics that applaud or censure for his individual talents or propensities: the themes of conversation are the characters and actions of Kings, and Senators, and Judges, and all manner of public characters,—the projects of enterprize,—the displays of wealth, and

the productions of genius. The thousands of the Babylonian population care nothing for the squabbles of individuals or of families; they hold converse about the movements of nations; and all the mighty things passing in that world of which their city is at once the centre and the epitome, occupy their thoughts, fresh and fresh as they are produced.

This mighty place is at once the grand arena for the ambitious, and the grand sanctuary for the destitute. If hope be still green, the powers still vigorous, and if the desire of wealth and of honour have not been deadened by the experiences of life, then London is resorted to as the place in which to succeed and to shine; or, if the spirit has been broken through disappointment, and the heart has become sick through misfortune, then London is the place where a man may best hide his misery in oblivion, or forget all that he has suffered, and begin the world anew. Of such a place, no single or general character can be given; nor is there an imagination so vigorous, or a language so copious, as to represent all its features in any single view. In the pages which follow, I shall note down briefly, but carefully, the impressions which the subjects treated of in the different chapters made upon my mind; and if, in so doing, I shall (as may very

possibly be the case) fail in representing London as it really is, I shall perform the humbler task of representing it as it appeared to myself; and, making allowance for differences of ability and taste, my sketch may not be entirely useless to others.

CHAPTER II.

AT SEA.

"There is a pleasure in an untried voyage
Upon the waste of ocean or of life;
And we go forth with light and buoyant spirits,
Heedless of all the waves and storms of either."

It was on a gloomy evening, in the gloomiest month of the year, and a year too in which the gloom was deepened by violent winds and prolonged rains, that I stepped on board the vessel, which "God prospering her voyage," (as the Captain devoutly said,) was, after the lapse of little more than a week, to gratify the wishes and the wonderings of many years, by actually landing me in that great Babylon, the fame of whose magnitude, whose wealth, and whose grandeur, not even ignorance and obscurity themselves can conceal.

Stepping on board a ship which is trimly built and well manned and apparelled, which is furnished with all that can make the passengers' temporary abode comfortable, which is calculated not to be much more than a week upon the waters, and not

an entire day without a sight of the land, is a very trifling act in itself; but still it may be an act fraught with the keenest interest, both on account of what one leaves behind and of what one goes forth to see. The hamlet or house in which we were born; the daisy-banks on which we alternately laughed and cried our infancy; the school, where we imagined that the tiny knowledge of the boy exceeded the wisdom of men; the hills and the valleys, where we wandered, and caught information green with the freshness and sparkling with the dew of Nature; the hawthorn-tree, under whose shade we first learned that there are wishes in the human breast fonder than those which youth breathes after knowledge; the green hillocks, which contain our venerable parents, or those friends whom Death had snatched from us ere time and the world had hardened either their hearts or our own; the points at which our successes or failures in life have been registered; the friends with whom we have been happy, ay, and the enemies who have sought to injure us;—these—these are objects from which the heart of man cannot be severed without a thrilling of its every chord. When we turn our back upon the land which gave us birth, however humble, and schooled us to manhood, however severe the discipline, the turning is something more than a mere movement of the body;—there

are ties to burst and wounds to bind, of which none knows excepting he who is placed in this situation; and whatever be the object of the voyage,—be it for the removal of listlessness or the gratification of curiosity, an escape from misfortune or a progress toward honour,—the heart of a man is not in him who does not feel it in every faculty of his mind, and in every limb of his body; and the man upon whom the last wafted adieu or the last waved handkerchief, no matter from or by whom, makes no impression, is not very well calculated either for observing or enjoying that which lies before him.

But this is not all: When one goes forth with a thirst of knowledge unquenched, a strength of endurance unimpaired, and a capacity of enjoying undiminished, the hope of the future soon breaks through the gloom of the past, nor is it long until the latter be altogether dispelled.

The evening, I have said, was gloomy; the air was heavy and still, and watery clouds hung round and obscured the blunted horns of the moon, which had that evening made her first appearance after a change, with scarcely more light in the gummy sky than the cold and feeble glimmer of a glow-worm. The water was without a ripple, and gave back the images of objects standing on its shores or floating on its surface, in lines as sharp and accurate as the truest mirror. The recent storms, and every

indication of them, were asleep; and though the vessel floated seaward with the tide, and the shores diminished and gradually faded from the dim sight, there was nothing to denote motion, and, to a landsman, nothing by which the gentlest breeze in the sky or the smallest curl upon the waters could be predicted: the sleep of the elements was profound; but I afterwards found, to my inconvenience and not a little to my alarm, that the sleep was but a momentary refreshment, out of which they were to waken and arise with redoubled strength, and to me, at least, with unexpected and unexperienced ferocity.

The glimmering moon left the sky, every star was veiled, and there was no light within the horizon, save the pale one in the ship's binnacle, or now and then a fish or a marine insect lighting up his cold and curious candle in the deep. Having spent an hour below with my fellow-passengers, from whom there appeared little to be learned, and in whom there was not much to be observed, I shut myself within my little state-room, and went to bed with as much carelessness and confidence as though I had been in the securest castle in the land. We know how we retire to sleep, but we neither know the time nor the cause of our awakening; and in the case of such an awakening as mine, it would be folly indeed to be thus wise.

I was awakened about the middle of the night,

and the perception, to all of my senses that in such a scene could perceive, was of no very pleasant character. The immediate cause of my awakening was a violent plunge of the ship, which flung me with great violence against the beams over my bed; swung the door of my apartment from its fastening, tumbled the whole furniture of the cabin in one confusion toward my side, tossed half of my fellow-passengers, who were groaning with sickness, out of their sleeping-places, and brought up a most suffocating smell from the bilge-water; while the smoke of the expiring fire, now confined by a tarpaulin and closed hatches, added to the pain and horror of the scene. The dreadful tossing, the sulphury odour, the thick smoke, the howling of the storm, and dashing of the sea, together with the groanings of my companions, made all that was about me no inaccurate type of what is said to be the place of final retribution for sin; and if any of those orators who make that place the point and ornament of their orations, had been in my place, and retained or recovered their senses, they might have had the elements of a description far more powerfully terrific than any that their own imagination could suggest.

The plunge toward my side was succeeded by a plunge toward the other; and plunge after plunge, dash after dash, and lamentation after la-

mentation, were repeated and increased to the very extremity of endurance. Above, the water was dashing as though "the windows of heaven had been opened;" beneath, it was roaring as though "the fountains of the great deep had been broken up;" and as the ship worked between the two, she kept creaking and cracking, as if every beam and plank had been about to be torn from its place and scattered in splinters along the turmoiling sea. Fits of sickness, agonizing groans, and hopeless prayers, by turns occupied my wretched companions, who were pitched from side to side of the cabin, among stools and trunks, receiving no assistance from others, and deprived of all power to assist themselves.

In a short time the sea, breaking in by some part above us, extinguished the lamp (which till then possessed some little illuminating power;) and thus the horror of pitchy darkness was added to the other horrors of the scene,—or rather, the horror of sight was exchanged for the more dreadful and insupportable horror of imagination. Upon deck, was the singing of the tempest through the cordage,—more dismal than any death-song that ever was heard, mingled with the harsh clanking of the machinery and the hollow voice of the Captain; below, were the piteous yells and fruitless lamentations of the passengers; and every where around

were a sea and a sky, which fancy pictured as joining in fearful, and to us final conflict.

Sickness or terror, there was no inquiry which, soon held me and my fellow-voyagers mute; and thus I was left to those goings forth of the imagination, which are in themselves, perhaps, more awful and more agonizing than even the felt and seen realities of woe. When the awe-striking object is seen, we can take exact measure of its powers, and we know it to be a thing armed only with the finite energies which belong to the material world,—when the blow is struck, if the striking be not fatal, there is an end of apprehension and despair, and Hope rises again and nerves herself for a new endurance; but when Terror puts on the mantle of darkness—darkness through which none of the senses can penetrate, and when that darkness is on the wavy sea, with the heavens raining deluges and blowing desolation,—that which appals us claims kindred with the world of Spirits, where the powers of good and of evil, being unknown and inscrutable, measure themselves against the mind itself, and add immensity to immortality.

I clung fast to my berth; I held in my breath, ready to yield it to the next gust of the wind, or the next swell of the waters; and when each had passed over, and the voice of the Captain speaking above amid the storm taught me to believe that the

feeble, fading, and interrupted wailings near me, were still on this side the boundary of time, I almost chided them as evidence that the scene had not yet closed—that the calm oblivion of Death had not put an end to living moments fraught with terrors and with agonies to which Death himself is usually a stranger. In this state I remained till a faint glimmering of light showed me my companions, strewed promiscuously amid the furniture of the cabin, stupefied by sickness, dripping with water, as insensible and almost as inanimate as that furniture itself.

As the morning broke, the storm subsided a little; and though the motion of the vessel continued unpleasant and even violent, I contrived to scramble out of my sleeping-hold, and up the cabin-stairs. The companion-door was barred outside against my exit, and the men were bustling and running backwards and forwards upon the deck. I pleaded for permission to cast but one look upon that sky, which haply I might see no more, and another towards those waters, in which, if they should again rise and roll in their anger, I apprehended that my final and long abode should be taken up. My wishes were so far complied with, as that I could raise my head through the half-opened covering, and look around me; and certainly and gladly would I have undergone the

horrors of another such night, terrible as they were, for one glance at the glories of such a morning.

The wind still continued to blow in occasional or continued gusts; and its blowing had swept away every vestige of those rain-clouds which, during the night, had made the sea and the sky appear as if commingling together in one deluge of chaos. The sea, as far as the eye could range on either hand, was lashed into billows, almost rivalling in height the topmost spar of our bark. The sun had just raised his disc above the ocean, and the whole mass of the living and moving waters caught tenfold grandeur from his beams,—grandeur of which those who live in the loveliest places of the firm land can scarcely have an idea. The dells between were dark as Erebus; and the sublime and solid billows came out in all the softening tints of azure and green. The wind gave to each a crest of smoking vapour, in which thousands of rainbows played their rich and enchanting hues. As the vessel threaded her way among these,—now in the height, now in the hollow, now twining her way to the right hand, and now to the left,—it seemed as though a viewless power was causing us to sweep onward among ten thousand volcanoes, each topped with its column of flame, and that exuberant Nature was lavishing her brightest glories where there were few eyes to witness and to wonder.

It was the grandeur of Nature herself, without a single touch of the handywork of man, and compared with which his happiest efforts were insignificant and tame. All the domes that he can raise, all the colours that he can mix, and all the gems that he can polish, were as nothing compared to the sublime contours and sparkling radiance of that maddening and turmoiling sea. Long did I gaze upon it; so long, indeed, that my imagination and all my other powers failed me, and I half walked, half tumbled, back again into my resting-place.

In a short time the Steward, whose fears had, during the violence of the storm, kept him still and silent within his own cabin, came creeping in to light the fire, and administer such consolations and bestow such comforts, as he was able to give and the passengers to receive. The consolations, to be sure, were not of the first class. To the anxious inquiry, whether the violent weather had entirely passed over, he replied, in the hardest notes of a dialect and a voice which were any thing but musical: "Na, it 'll nae pass sae seen; and that o't that has passed, is lookin' o'er the shouther o't, an I 'm dreadin' will be back again wi' an awfu'er sough and a mair deadly splash than ever." When he was questioned about the quantity of danger that might be apprehended, his responses were not a bit more satisfactory: "Was

there any danger of drowning?"—"Ay, there was that: he had never seen the sea ony itherwise disposed sin' he ken'd it." The vessel was still pitching and rolling a good deal: "Was there any danger of its going down in any of those plunges; and if so, whether was the danger greatest by the bows, the stern, or either of the sides?"—"He didna ken—cou'dna say—ships had gaen down mony times wi' that fearfu' plunges; and there was nae doot, gin the Almighty had sae ordaint it, that ony o' the four ways wad be a' the same." As the ship still struck against the waves with the violence and the noise of thunder, it was asked, whether there was any danger of its going to pieces. "There was nae sekeerity agains' ony thing upo' saut water.—Muckle mair crazy ships had nae doot come to land; but in geed troth, mony as tight had been dung to splinters, and no' a soul lived to tell the tale o't."

In such words of consolation as these the Steward held colloquy with those whose bodily and mental agonies were sufficiently acute in themselves; and when they prayed for this, that, and the other thing, he assured them that they would get it very soon, but at that very moment it was not safe to come at it; and that "In a' human afflictions, by land or by sea, there was naething sae geed as a little patient resignation to the will o' the Almighty,"—a maxim which, whatever of general or

religious truth might be in it, was not much calculated to soothe the minds or mitigate the sufferings of those to whom it was addressed.

When the fire began to burn, and the Steward had repacked (for it was absolutely repacking) the passengers, and mopped the cabin-floor, the Captain descended all dripping from the helm, which he had never once let out of his hand for ten long and heavy hours. He had cased himself in an oiled leather frock, with a great cap of the same which tied over his ears, and he looked more like a nondescript animal that the agitation of the water had brought up from the bottom of the sea, than the little, smart, hardy tar, who had welcomed us on board, and invited us to partake of all his cheer on the preceding evening. In heart and courage he was, however, still the same. The fears which the mysterious responses of the Steward had excited, he did much to allay: "We had as good a sea-boat under us as ever swam; we had excellent sea-room: he had weathered fifty worse squalls than that, and doubted not but he would weather fifty more." The last was rather an ambiguous consolation; but complaint was useless, and so we were as silent and resigned as circumstances would allow. Before he retired to his own cabin, to take that rest of which he must have stood so much in need, he offered to every one of his passengers

such refreshment as could be prepared; but the expense of this was not great,—a biscuit or two, to be laid on the pillow, being all that any of us could take.

Still, there is always a sort of hope inspired by seeing the principal man. When Shakspeare makes Richard say: "The King's name is a tower of strength," he makes him deliver a sentiment which is absolutely and universally true; for whatever mankind look up to as possessed of superior skill, power, or command, the sight, or even the very thought, of that inspires them with courage and confidence. The leader of the party, the father of the family, the commander of the army, and the captain of the ship, all have a strength and a defence in their presence and countenance, which nothing under them, however strong or however skilful, can upon any occasion inspire. It is the same sentiment which makes men more bold and more firm under persecution and martyrdom for religion than for any thing else. The idea that they are in the immediate presence and service of a Being who, by a single fiat, can quell and annihilate all opposition, is calculated to excite and sustain the very maximum and excess of fortitude; and he who thus firmly believes and feels, heeds not what may happen to him.

The confidence inspired by the presence and

words of the Captain remained, (with me at least, for there was little disposition on my part to ask, and still less upon that of my fellows to reply,) for a considerable time after he had gone; and, though the place in which I was, was both confined in room and cold in temperature, and neither the state of my head nor that of my limbs would allow me to leave it, yet I began to think it a place of safety, and, compared with what it had recently been, a place of comfort. I was even pleased that the storm had come upon us, because it would be something to tell; and yet to whom was I to tell it, going forth as I was to a place where I was to be an utter stranger, and where, of course, no one could be interested in my fate? Still there is pleasure in an evil that is past; and as the fields are greenest after the rain, and the sea and sky most glorious after the storm, so hope is ever the brightest when it first beams upon the darkness of despair; and even the humblest of life's comforts is sweet the moment after life itself has been in jeopardy.

But the hopes and pleasures of life are often short, in proportion to the brightness of their shining and the sweetness of their relish; and I had not well resolved that I was very comfortable, when the storm called me to feelings and apprehensions of a very different character. At a call of "All

hands on deck!" the Captain started from his brief repose. I heard the bolts of the companion-door shutting behind him; and the heavy tarpaulin thrown over the light left me to the dark and conjectural glimmer of the bull's eye over my little cabin, or the dim twinkling of the fire, now in the act of being stifled by its own smoke. There was a hasty calling of voices, rattling of cordage, and clanking of pauls; and ere that had subsided, the sea and the sky again awakened their diapason of horror; and the wind, the rain, and the waves, seemed to have collected and conspired for our immediate destruction. The cabin was again in sulphury gloom; the groans and lamentations of my fellow-passengers were more frequent and piteous: the rattling, the creaking, and the shouting, were dismal enough; but they were nothing to the roaring of the storm above, and raging of the sea beneath, every blast of which must have laid the ship prone upon the sea, and every blow sounded as if a world had been shattered.

No man who has not experienced such a scene, the first time he has been upon the ocean, so confined that he could neither see what was taking place, nor communicate what he felt, can fathom a state of horror equal to that in which I then was. An insulated thing,—cut off from human help and human sympathy—upon the wide sea—ignorant of

the green earth and the glorious sun—with every fathom above, beneath, and around me, armed not only with the power but with the certainty of death. I might have cried; but would the winds and the waves heed or hear my complainings? and who else could hear amidst the thunders of their voices? I might stretch out my hand; but had the deluging cloud, or the dashing water, a hand ready to deliver me? I might even call upon Him, to whom the most heedless and worst of men call when help can come to them from no other quarter; but what had I done, or what could I merit, that the ordinary course of nature should be changed for my safety or comfort?—We do not always consult Him, when we begin an enterprise; and therefore we have no ground to expect that he will hear or help us, when the course or the issue of that enterprise proves adverse. Thus situated, my thoughts, wherever I attempted to direct them, came back to myself; and my hopes, wherever I directed them, were returned effectless. Returned hope is begun despair; and mine was more than begun.

I was neither asleep nor awake;—nay, I may almost say, I was neither alive nor dead. No sound of human voice reached me, but the most feeble and agonizing sounds of woe. Between me and that sea, whose every billow had power to drown a city or drive a mountain from its base,

there were nothing, save a few inches of timber; and the crash which that ever and anon gave, as it descended into the hollow of the waters, seemed enough to dash an earth to shivers. At every stroke I felt assured that the ship was so broken; and the rushing of the water that followed, sounded as if the tide of death had, in all its power and all its swiftness, been bursting in at the fracture.

I listened in terrible anticipation. I wished, nay, I prayed, that that death, which I reckoned so certain, would also be speedy; and that as I had felt the full terror of the final destroyer, I might also feel the repose which he alone can give. At each return of the thundering sound, I said to myself, "Surely this is it now!" and at every new rushing of the waves, I looked wistfully toward the cabin-floor, to see whether the quantity of water there had increased; and also to the paly light above me, in the hope that it would at once start open, and let in the dreadful deliverer of my tortured mind: but even this sad and oblivious hope eludes us when we seek for it; and we cannot die, any more than we can live, when such is our own desire.

For two days and a night I remained thus; and they were times, both in the present feeling and the future memory, longer than double the same

tale of ordinary years. No language can paint them. It was not the violence of the storm, the yeasty turmoil of the waves, or the horrible and apparently helpless rocking of the ship; it was a storm of the imagination,—a maddening swell of all the powers of the mind, and reason reeling to and fro, more devious and more helpless than any ship. Imagination and reality were so blended and jumbled together, that, compared with what I felt and fancied, madness itself had been tranquillity. All was uncertainty; all was doubt. I groped about me to ascertain if the things around me were still those of the world of reality and of hope, and I felt by turns all my own limbs, as if to make sure whether the form and the lineaments of man were still mine.

I know not what was my mental occupation. It was not thought; it was not reverie; it was not imagination: it was as though the whole powers of the mind had been dashed into a chaos, and the whole of my disjointed and disordered faculties had drifted whither the wind listed and the wave rolled,—or rather, to some unknown and fearful region, where wind and wave, sea and sky, commingling and commingled with the broken potsherd of the earth, had left nothing which the judgment could comprehend, or upon which the fancy could dwell.

The incidents of my past life,—my joys, my

sorrows, my fortunes, my misfortunes, my loves, my hatreds,—all that I might have been—all that I had not been,—haunted me like the ghosts of the mighty dead; and while I seemed of no more note, and had no more command of myself, than a single atom of the careering air, or a single drop in the turmoiling ocean, I felt as if borne upon the wings of irresistible fate, from death to death, and from annihilation to annihilation. The chaos within me accorded well with the chaos that was without: it was shreds of dreams—snatches of reality—touches of reason, and traces of madness—twinges of fear, and turns of resignation—dawnings of hope, and dashings of despair: I would die, and I would not die—I would live, and I would not live. I was in a world of shadows—a place of things which held fearful sportings upon the margin of the grave: now I was anxious that the dread leap might be taken,—and anon, I would that I might once more revisit the sun and the sky. I became unconscious.

When at length I came upon deck, I found the scene as pleasant, as the last one, of which I was conscious below, was frightful. The sun was in a cloudless sky; and throughout the whole morning horizon no angry billow curled its head. There was still, indeed, a good deal of wind, and also a good deal of swell; but the wind was favourable for the course which we were steering, and the ship

lay steadily to the sea, along which it glided with swift and beautiful motion. What a transition! the last time I looked upon those waters I would gladly have exchanged all their glories, ay, and all the floating wealth in the world, had it been mine, for a single foot of naked rock or barren heath; and now all was so sparkling, so swift, and withal so safe, that I hoped a scene of so much pleasure would not be too soon over, but that I should have leisure to enjoy the sweet of that whereof I had so lately tasted the bitter.

As evening set in, the coast of England, from which the storm had driven us far to the eastward, appeared, high and purple with the rays of the setting sun behind it like a fringe of gold; and as night fell, and the moon had also retired from us, we swept under the bold height and bright beacon-fire of Flamborough. I remained long upon the deck; and as the wind and the waves had both subsided, and the little marine animals were, in peace, lighting their candles on the surface of the water, as if in mimickry of the sky overhead, I felt a pleasure both new and exquisite. Not the least portion of that pleasure was that derived from the new and singular motions, which the unconscious movements of the ship gave to the celestial bodies. The whole blue dome of the sky, appearing more hemispherical than ever I had observed, was one

congregated mass of sparkling lustres; and as the ship worked its way, sometimes to the right hand and sometimes to the left, that mighty dome seemed loosened from its eternal fastenings, and making various portions of a revolution, sometimes on the one direction and sometimes on the other. Occasionally my eye caught glimpses of lights across the deep, which reeled and revolved in the same manner; and frequent shooting stars added to the confusion of glories. It was altogether one of the most delightful, and perhaps one of the most elevating and instructive pages that could be spread for man's contemplation. Our little bark, the result of a few months' labour of a few rude hands, at a distance from any solid object with which it could be compared—the ocean below us, covered with obscure darkness, and the stars and meteors in all their brightness, and their motion overhead, made it appear as though we had bid adieu to the globe of the earth, and taken our station among the millions of independent globes that obey the fiat of their Creator through the infinitude of space.

The sublimity or the novelty, I leave others to decide which, made me linger long upon deck; nor was it until the commander of the watch had repeatedly cautioned me that I would do well to rest while the winds and the waves rested, that I retired

to my berth; and there I slid into a profound sleep, from a reverie as delightful as my former dreamings had been dismal. Man is mere potter's clay or sealing-wax, in other hands than the immediate ones of his Maker; and nowhere can this truth be more clearly and convincingly demonstrated, than in the vicissitudes of a landsman's feelings at sea.

I slept not long, for the storm again returned; and though the return was neither so violent in itself, nor so alarming in its attributes, it dispelled all the pleasurable feelings with which I had retired to rest, and made me again long to be on dry land. We kept drifting about the whole day, with a wind more foul and contrary than furious; but it came in gusts, and as no two of these came from the same quarter, the tossing had all the disagreeable qualities of the preceding storm, without any of its awful sublimity. Sometimes we were driven in one direction, and anon in that which was exactly opposite. One moment we were so near the low, flat, and green land, that one would have fancied the possibility of leaping ashore: anon we were trying upon the other tack, with nothing in our view except weltering waves, and vessels of various sizes and constructions reeling about—some with one or two small sails like our own, some with bare masts, and some to whom the storm had hardly left a mast standing.

What with watching and with working, our crew were sadly exhausted, and a consultation was held, whether they should not allow the vessel to drift I know not where; but ere this was resolved on, the sky began to clear, the wind settled steadily in the north-west; and as night approached we were gliding along with the greatest ease and velocity, and before the return of morning had brought a partial return of the bad weather, we were safely at anchor, amid a thousand other vessels, in Yarmouth Roads, right under Lowestoff, — where, both in consequence of the unfavourable direction of the wind, and of the exhaustion of our men, we resolved to remain during the following day.

As the day advanced, numberless vessels crowded around us, all of them more or less shattered by the storm; and we could observe, to seaward of us on the bank, the mast-heads of several that had gone down in the gale. A sea-life is, however, not one of long lamentation: we were now in comparative smooth water, within a cable's length of the land, and had sustained no injury or loss; my fellow-passengers crawled out of their berths, the Captain tuned his violin, upon which he was by no means an unskilful performer; we made merry—merrier than it was possible for men to make on land; and now that the danger was over, and all in so far accustomed to the sea, every one had a jest to play

off at the storm; for storms at sea, like troubles on land, are subjects of derision after they are over; and when man feels that he is again safe, he can mock at that which a very short time previously made him tremble.

When we again got under weigh, the weather was as serene as it had previously been gloomy; and as we moved along, attempting in vain to count the windmills and church spires on the coast, vessels collected every where, as if magic had created them out of the waves; and as each spread out all the canvas it could stretch, the sight was most spirit-stirring, and gave me a more exalted notion of the commercial enterprise and commercial wealth of England, than I could have acquired by any other means. Even while the estuary of the Thames was so wide as that the one shore was but dimly and the other not at all discernible, it required continual watchfulness lest we should run against any of our companions on the sea; and when we came into the narrow reaches we had absolutely to elbow our way as a man has in passing along a crowded street. The number of vessels which we saw or passed in the course of a single day could be little short of ten thousand. It is true, that they had been collecting in all the neighbouring ports and anchorages during ten days of one of the most violent storms that ever was

known in those seas; but still they were the collection of only ten days: they were all loaded with merchandize, and all bound for London.

One would naturally have supposed that a fleet so numerous, with cargoes so varied and so valuable, would have comprised the whole of the vessels in the trade, and glutted every market even in the metropolis. But as we came nearer and nearer the city, I found that such a calculation would have been wholly erroneous. For several miles, both banks of the river were thickly wedged with ships, which doubled rank upon rank, and closed file upon file, as we advanced, till the whole surface was literally paved with them, and the working of our slow and sinuous course equalled in difficulty, and resembled in appearance, one struggling for passage along a crowded street. In comparison with the whole, the coming fleet, which had so strongly excited my astonishment, was not more than a single drop in the bucket; and when I looked upon all the craft for the movement of merchandize upon the waters, and all the piles of dusky building for its reception upon shore, I could easily conceive that all the riches which I had seen in motion the preceding day, would sink as viewless and as effectless into the incomprehensible stores of this mighty mart, as a pitcher of water would do into the ocean.

"And is this London?" said I to myself. "Is

this that seat of British power—that chosen residence of all that is rich and gay and splendid—that mightiest mistress of the world, that draws wealth both physical and intellectual from every region of the earth, and which gives law and example and impulse to the nations!" I looked upon the brick houses and wooden hovels, the smoking furnaces, and the dark and dingy gates and engines, of which I could catch glimpses amid the intervals of ships: they seemed poor, little, and insignificant. I endeavoured to look beyond, and get a glance of buildings of choicer architecture, and more metropolitan character, rising terrace after terrace, and line after line beyond, as one may find in some other places; but, if there were any such, the curtains of oblivion were drawn upon them,—a fog, which had all the darkness, and apparently much of the solidity of those mountains which admit of no cultivation, and suffer no change, seemed permanently fixed upon each side of the river, with its base reaching almost to the edge of the water; and all that was visible had the appearance of nothing else than a paltry appendage and convenience to that which was floating around me. I might have even doubted whether the water itself was not, like all else within my view, a thing of human creation. The late rains in the upper part of the country,

and the recent agitation of the water to seaward, had worked the river to the colour, and, as it appeared, almost to the consistency, of mortar. As the larger vessels crept, and the lighter ones skimmed along its surface, it did not rise in glassy folds, or break away in glittering pearls, as had the waters which I had aforetimes seen. Its dull undulations were like those of brass in the crucible; and it had been no great stretch of imagination to feel more apprehension of being burned than wetted by contact with it.

I will not say that this is the most impressive approach to Babylon the Great—I will not argue that this congregating of the men, the ships, and the commerce, of all nations—that this confusion of the water with the land—this reeling to and fro—this din—this duskiness—this discord of order and activity (if I may so name that which is inexpressible,)—is finer than a bird's-eye view from the little hills on the north or the south, or than the Royal gardens, the parks, and the palaces, that first present themselves to a visitor coming from the west: but this I will say,—that I never met with a scene so completely wonderful in itself—so wholly without the precincts of former experience—so beggaring to language, and so baffling to imagination. "This is old father Thames, in the overwhelming wonders of his wealth, and

those ships and warehouses contain the stimuli or the rewards of those persons which have made England the Queen, and London the jewel, of all the world." Thinking thus, I stepped on shore, anxious to escape from such a Babel of excitements, in which there was no single point or single object that towered over the rest, to draw and to rivet my attention. In such a place reflection has nothing to do: it is the region of mechanical dexterity and mechanical drudgery. You look upon it as upon snow-flakes reeling in a wintry day—it is wonderful in itself, but it contains nothing upon which the eye or the mind can repose.

CHAPTER III.

GENERALITIES.

When you have known the canons of the winds
That sweep, and of the rains that pour, o'er Albion;
Defined by Geometry the shape that clouds
Must every day assume, told the expression
Which every face must wear, set bounds to thought,
Said "Here discovery can no more," and fix'd
Each man's achievements the next thousand years;
Why then, but not till then, you may attempt
A portraiture of LONDON. It is Babel,
In greatness, in confusion, and in change;
But yet there's order in it.

MS. POEM.

FROM whatever part of the world a man may come, or however he may be prepared by former experience, London will be to him a six months' wonder at the least, before he can analyze any of its parts, or understand any of its peculiarities; and those ridiculous opinions which are abroad in the world,—some making it all wealth, others all poverty; some making it all enjoyment, others all labour and misery; some making it all knowledge

and intelligence, others stamping it with gross ignorance of even the most ordinary occurrences of nature; some making it all scrambling and grasping and panting after gain, others making it all squandering and dissipation; some making it the only place where a man may thrive and prosper, others denouncing it as the high road to ruin; some appealing to it as the very fountain of liberty, liberality, and political intelligence, and others as the dead weight which oppresses England, and at second hand enslaves the world;—these, and all of similar description, for no one can almost sum up their number, and which agree in nothing, except that each is false and partial as respects the whole, though true, perhaps, of some part, ought to be put aside, if one is to have any correct notion of this wonderful place. The fact is, that it is each and all things by turns; and when one would describe it as being thus or thus, he tells not what London is, but merely what haunts himself frequented, and what company he kept while there.

Some small man of the provinces,—some starveling *littéraire* of a corner, may find his way to London in the steerage of a vessel or on the top of a stage-coach; and after having gaped and wondered at two or three public buildings, dined half a dozen times at cheap taverns, squeezed himself into all the theatres in suc-

cession, and wondered that nobody took the least interest in the small tales or smaller scandals of his little *coterie* at home, may, and very often does, return back again, and amuse persons of his own calibre with a diatribe against cockney ignorance, cockney vulgarity, or cockney prejudices. But if the question were brought home to him—if he were required to define what it is that he means by those convenient words, it would uniformly be found that he were about as wise respecting the real merits and character of London, as though he had never seen it.

A man who had seen no other animal than a donkey, would be about as well qualified for writing a treatise on the character and habits of all the Mammalia; or one who had heard no sound sweeter than the braying of that musician, would be just as well qualified for writing a general theory of music and musical criticism, as one of those flying observers (and their powers of observation are generally as vitiated as their experience is limited) is qualified for giving even a guess at what London is. If the man be honest and in his senses, and not wholly overcome by the magnitude and novelty of the place, London may have the feature which he describes; but then it has so many thousand features besides, that Fluellen's identity of places,

by "a river at Monmouth, and a river also at Macedonia," is perfection compared to it.

It may be said that, with this consciousness of the difficulty—the impossibility—of the subject, it is presumptuous in me to write a single line respecting it; and I do admit that if I pretended to give an express and general image, I should be professing that which neither myself nor any other individual can accomplish; but still I have observed a few points—made the observation of them a business and a study—gone about that without any overweening admiration, any inveterate prejudice, or any ground of bias the one way or the other. Thus, my views must have freshness, if not force, because I have made them unassisted and from the originals; and if they have not truth of representation, I claim for them at least honesty of intention,—and if what I write shall fail of being interesting to the reader, it is assuredly not because I have been indifferent to the subjects about which I write.

The first thing that struck me, and as I should suppose strikes every one upon the first beholding of this Babel, is the total insignificance of single persons and single objects; and perhaps the mortification produced by this feeling thrown back upon a man himself, is the reason why there is, in some of the vainer provincial towns and cities, a disposition

to underrate—absolutely to calumniate, the metropolis for their own glory, and for that of the place which they have chosen as the idol of their admiration. In even the largest of our provincial places, there are always individuals loitering in particular streets or particular corners, who are almost as much of fixtures as the pavement upon which they stand or the buildings against which they lean; and the inhabitant is either very humble, very worthless, or both, who cannot command a few bows and recognitions from these animated posts: in London, however, there is no such thing—the crowd sweeps along like a torrent; you cannot pause to gossip, for if you go not willingly with it, it will bear you along whether you will or not.

You meet with no yawning idler, no curious quidnunc, no peeping inquisitor into your own private history, or into any other private histories of which you may have the keeping. No doubt there are idlers, there are quidnuncs, and there are virtuosi of small slander in London as well as in other places; but they form no feature of London, they come not abroad into the streets, and they neither arrest the steps nor disturb the thoughts of those busy crowds which are every where reeling around you. In your provincial town people run in all directions, and are occupied with one single topic which they toss about like a hand-ball; but in London the

case is reversed,—many men pursue the same route, but each is busied with his own speculation, and as he knows not the persons by whom he is elbowed, he of course never thinks of communicating it to them, or in any way disturbing them about it.

If any man be seized with an overweening conceit of himself, impressed with an idea of his transcendant importance or value to society, London will cure him, if his cure be not all the more desperate. The pursy provincial, who takes upon him to insult his neighbours because he happens to possess a few thousand pounds, becomes a mere cypher in Cornhill or Threadneedle-street; the provincial bashaw, who ranges the whole village with his equipage, is outshone upon the Drive by a slopseller or dealer in old books; and the Adonis who conquers and then abandons half the fair in a remote county, cannot in Bond-street distinguish the fine gentleman that the tailor made from the tailor that made him, and thus he is humbled in the sight of both.

This tendency to restrain within narrow limits all the adventitious grounds of human vanity, and to drive man back for his notoriety upon that which belongs to him as man, is one of the most valuable features in the character of London. It gives a man fair play, clears the arena for him, and so places him, that if he does not triumph the fault

is wholly his own. Each individual feels that he can make no figure without the actual possession of those qualities to which he pretends; and that even then, if he is not courteous and polite, others will be, and desertion and neglect will be his fate. Accordingly there are, among the trading and mercantile population of London,—who though they do not constitute what is called "the world," or make any very great show as individuals, yet have the principal share in stamping the permanent character of the place,—a greater share of urbanity and politeness, than among the same class of persons in any other part of the world: the same politeness descends even still lower; and a stranger never gets an uncivil answer or a piece of wrong information in the streets of London, even from the poor wight who picks up his living by sweeping a crossing. You may meet a man who would beg of you, and very possibly with one who would have no great compunction at stabbing you, if he could meet you at a fit place, or who would attempt to pick your pocket any where; but still, though he be thus zealous in his profession, good or bad, once ask the way of him, or any other question that he is able and that it is reasonable for him to answer, and you have your reply with the utmost candour and fidelity. Even those unfortunate females, whose punishment is, in all cases, greater than

their crime, and who, in by far the majority, are the victims of their own credulity and of man's cruelty, have the air of a wild and desolate politeness about them,—a certain wreck both of feelings and of charms, worthy of a better fate, which comes across the mind with a touch of regret and forgiveness, never inspired by the sight of the same class of persons in less cultivated and polite places. Those persons do let passers by know what they are, but still, if modesty and politeness can be at all predicated of those poor outcasts, they are modest and polite; and notwithstanding all the dementing and demoralizing circumstances to which they are exposed, they have still the bearing of women, and even, in a great measure, that of ladies.

Every where, indeed, throughout the thronged streets of the Great Babylon, and while the confusion of tongues, and indeed of all noises that you can imagine, are rending your ears to pieces, you cannot fail to remark that each is for some purpose. There may be idlers in the streets of London, and there always are persons in those streets going about for worse purposes than mere idleness; but still, the whole has an air of occupation and activity quite peculiar and astonishing. There are no half-employed shopkeepers yawning at the door, no maid-servants gossipping, or children playing in the streets,—every one who makes a noise, or soli-

cits attention there, does it with a view to profit; and if there be listlessness and loitering, these are confined within doors.

Every where, too, you meet with that perfect frankness and civility to which I have adverted, and which, as it is the result of frequent casual intercourse, makes that intercourse pleasing. But if you have come from a little society where external courtesy is the sign of cordiality of heart, you will be sadly out in Babylon. The Babylonian smile, and bow, and welcome, are the genuine smile, and bow, and welcome of the counter. They are levelled not at you, but at your purse. The man varnishes his speech for the same purpose that he varnishes his sign-board, and arranges his smiles just as he arranges the goods in his shop-window—for the purpose of attracting customers; and he who is so very fair with you in the purchase of what you require, and so polite when you are paying him for it, cares no more for you than the gown or the gallipot upon his shelves, and would look with all the complacency in the world upon you taking the air upon the little platform in front of Newgate.

The constant attention which every man in London must pay to his own trade or profession, and the great concentration of his attention and feelings towards himself, that arises from continually com-

ing in contact with so many persons whom he does not know, and for whom he does not care, except in the way of business, destroys all those little links of feeling and touches of the heart, which are found in smaller societies. No doubt, many of the roughnesses are polished off; but the shining facettes—those glowing little discs which let out the internal lustre of the character, are destroyed along with them. Suavity there is much, and suavity to one's heart's content, of any description that may be desired; but while all the blandishments of life, and all the comforts of animal existence, are full and free, the heart lies dead, cold, and callous; and amid all the excess of the world's pleasures and comforts, that which really makes man man, and life life, is no where to be found.

If you be able to do for yourself,—or rather if you be able to do for others that which is esteemed by them, they will receive your services with more respect, and reward them with more liberality, than you can find in any other place; and if you come properly recommended to them in difficulty or distress, they will in all probability be more indulgent to you in pecuniary forbearance, and more liberal in mere alms-giving, than any other people with whom you can meet or associate; but you cannot help feeling that all this, however necessary, praiseworthy, or durable, it may be in itself, wants the

master-charm of society: it is all a matter either of common bargain and sale, or of the overflowing of great wealth, which the giver bestows without care, as he has it in abundance; but if you seek for the sympathy of the heart, you are astonished to find that the thing is not so much as known.

In this way, there is not a more liberal race than that mass of merchants, in whatever wares they may deal, which make up the permanent thousands of London; but still all their notions partake of the artificial nature and system of the place, and are as far removed from the genuine and unsophisticated feelings of human beings, as the lines of dust and of brick are from the romantic displays of Nature herself in woods and wilds.

So many causes combine to produce this effect, that they among whom it so necessarily and so generally exists, are not to be blamed for it. That the dweller in Babylon has not the same warmth of heart, the same impassioned love of friendship, and the same disposition to be in all the turns and varieties of life, through weal and woe, your warm brother, as the inhabitant of the lonely provincial village in which you were born, is no more his fault, than it is his intrinsic merit and virtue, not to pry into your private character and affairs, and not to slander and backbite you, as the other is but too apt to do. Life in the country is a life of passion

and close connexion, and you get attached to those who live near you from long and daily associations. Life in London is, on the other hand, life in which those little ties do not exist,—because there is neither use nor room for their operation. About all things in the country there is that idea of permanence, without which friendship or hatred never takes firm root: one has hills, and fields, and streams, and forests,—things which are made to outlive man; and all one's projects and attachments are apt to borrow a trace of their durability. In London again, one looks upon that which is in continual motion and change; and in such a contemplation it is difficult, if not impossible, for the mind to fix itself.

Even admitting that there were the disposition, there is not in London the means or even the possibility of that mixing up of the passions with the business of life, which gives to the society of other places its choicest sweets, its most disagreeable bitters, and all those peculiarities which make it a something which you can characterize and delineate as one. The whole of one's time would be insufficient for acquiring such a knowledge of even a small number of those with whom one meets and does business, as would enable one to judge whether they ought to be made friends of or not; and therefore all the inquiry which is needful, and

indeed practicable, is, whether they have the disposition and the ability to fulfil their pecuniary engagements.

It has been mentioned as a sort of libel upon the Babylonian character,—a sort of mark of the beast—of Mammon, indelibly imprinted upon them,—that the words "a good man," do not apply to the goodness of the man himself, but to the character which his banker is able to give of him; that "a good man" is, in reality, nothing more or less than a good purse; and that if the possessor were John Doe or Richard Roe, or even Aldgate Pump, he would be just as good as though he had the talents of a Bacon, the philanthropy of a Howard, the manliness of a Burdett, the calm judgment of a Lord Eldon, or the indubitable sincerity of a Liverpool. Now, so far from being any thing amiss, this is so much a matter of course and of necessity, that one might as well quarrel with the magnitude of the wealth of London, or with the throng of people that are continually crowding to and from it, as with this its peculiar and characteristic definition of the value of a man. It must not be lost sight of (and if carefully kept in view it will throw light upon some of the general features of Metropolitan society) that London, as London, has nothing to do with the private worth and private characters of individuals. If a merchant

be an intelligent, a kind, and an honourable man, it may be all the better for the inmates of his country box at Balham Hill or Clapham Common, but it signifies not a single farthing upon 'Change; and if he conduct himself with propriety, pay his way, and be civil to those with whom he meets, his associates at the tavern or the club-room will care just as little. If he is "a good man" in all circumstances and matters where they come in contact with him, it is no matter what he may be in those of which they do not hear; and though, in consequence of this circumstance, many may mingle in respectable society, who have abstractly no great title to be there; yet it is equally true that many are saved from losing their caste in public, and the means of retrieving themselves from occasional errors, by the very circumstance of their private affairs being kept out of view. Thus, upon the whole, the advantages and disadvantages so far balance each other, that it is much safer to say that, in this its most remarkable characteristic, London society is different from the society of smaller places, than that is either better or worse. In a smaller place, a man is something independent and of himself, he connects himself, as it were, with the history of his locality, his character and conduct are private property—in every body's mouth where he lives,—they go upon the record after his death, and if he happen

to be conspicuous either for virtues or for vices, for talents or for follies, his place stands empty for a time, and people either long for him back again, or are glad that they are rid of him. In London, on the other hand, however high or however low—however famed or however notorious may be the individual, his individuality goes for nothing: he feels all along that he is a part of something—of something so vastly greater than himself, that it completely overtops him; and therefore he is driven to the mere gratification of his passions and appetites, as the only enjoyment that life can afford. He is anxious to feast upon all that he can while he lives; because he knows full well that when he is gone, another will take his place the next day, and ere the sun has twice girdled the world, the interest which he has excited will be among the things that are unheeded.

CHAPTER IV.

JOHN BULL.

Bull, in the main, is a very honest, plain-dealing fellow, choleric, bold, and of a very inconstant temper; but then he is very apt to quarrel with his best friends, especially if they pretend to govern him: if you flatter him, you may lead him like a child. ARBUTHNOT.

ALTHOUGH the character of man in the Great Babylon, be as Babylonish—as confused and confounded as any thing about it,—although it be Jewish in one quarter, and Gentile in another,—although in one society you shall hear the purest English, in a second the broadest Scotch, in a third the hardest Irish, in a fourth French, or Spanish, or German, or Italian, and in a fifth a language which has not yet been admitted into the most polyglott of all the vocabularies,—although the forms and features correspond—here the cadaverous faces, jelly-looking eyes, satyr mouths, and cold cunning expression of the circumcised remnant—there the bland broad faces, blue eyes, and

determined but unspeculative air of genuine England—in one place the winking grey optics, solemn faces, and cautious mien of the pawky Caledonians —in another the ferret eyes, and pointed and puckered face of Hibernia, screwed up as if every muscle of it were brandishing a shillelah—and in many other places, beings that can claim physiognomical kindred with no definite and pure race of men or of monkeys in the world, but who seem to have been generated of the mud in the Thames, or the fog upon its banks;—though you meet with all this, and meet with it in every degree, and in every blending; yet still it is true, that for the grand constituent parts of this confusion of characters, and of races, you must look to England, to Scotland, and to Ireland;—to England in an especial manner, because, as is the case with every country, England stamps more or less of her own character, not only upon all who are born within her boundaries, but upon all who reside there for any considerable time. In order, therefore, to furnish one element whereby to judge of the Metropolitan character, or rather to comprehend some of the peculiarities which will come out in the subsequent detached sketches, it will be necessary to notice a few of the leading features of John Bull, and also to hint at the changes that are produced upon them

by the disturbing influences of Sawney the Scot, and Pat of the Sister Kingdom.

Before doing this, it is worthy of remark, that the Scottish influence is chiefly felt in the City. It seems that by an invariable law of their nature, Irishmen consider idleness as the true criterion and badge of a gentleman; and as every native of that country is a gentleman, whether he happens to have wherewithal to cover the rearward of his gentility or not, comparatively few of the natives of the Green Isle mingle with the merchants of the City. Such of them as have got little or no education, and that comprehends by far the greater number, are gentleman day-labourers; and the rest are gentlemen *per se*. If they could come to the enjoyment of mercantile wealth by a *coup de main*, they would like it well enough; but they cannot settle down upon three-footed stools, and bend over desks and ledgers, during the time necessary for their noviciate.

This, however, is just the thing for a Scotsman. His desire of getting to the top of the tree is to the full as strong; and though his hopes be not so ardent and extravagant, they are more constant, and so make up in time for what they are deficient in momentary intensity. The Irishman skips and leaps like a squirrel; and when, as very often happens, he loses his hold, down he souses in the mud

on the other side, soiled, if not crippled; and he has to recover himself in a variety of idle gambols, before he can attempt another leap,—which has every chance of being as unsuccessful as the former. The wary Scot, on the other hand, singles out his tree with great care; sees that it is vigorous, so that it may last; strong, that it may bear him; and firmly rooted, so that the storms of accident may not blow it down. He takes care too that the lowest branches shall be completely within his reach, and that there is a succession of tough and convenient ones for making his ascent quite secure. He begins at the very bottom, examines every twig before he will trust himself to it, and never moves one foot till he be certain that the other is firm. Others, who are more ardent and less cautious, scramble past him, and are apt to jeer at the wily slowness of his progress; but he never minds them,—he climbs away, patient and persevering; and when they are tumbling down, and he still climbing up, it is his turn to laugh, and he does it, and that heartily.

This admirable adaptation of the Scotsman for advancing in mercantile pursuits, his extreme docility to his superiors, the comparatively little upon which he can make himself appear respectable, and his constant endeavours to set his sails to every wind, have not only thronged the counting-

houses of London, with Scots clerks, but added Scots partners to most of the firms. But still, notwithstanding the numbers and the influence of those personages, they have not attempted to stamp a genuinely Scots character even upon that portion of Metropolitan society of which they form so large a fraction. The very qualities which render them the best servants of their employers, at one stage of their progress, and the most efficient associates at another, dispose them also to ape the manners and imbibe the tastes of those about them. Besides, they find that none of those matters upon which the very highest value was set in their own country, is of the least consequence in that to which they are come. Their small feudal connexions,—the boasted relationship to some unshaven proprietor of two or three barren mountains,—the legendary accounts of two or three marvellous men, of whom nobody out of Scotland ever heard,—the puritanical sobriety in which they were educated, and the parsimony in which they were so industriously trained,—have no counterpart, and find no sympathy among the speculative and luxurious people that they now meet. Thus they gradually lose that character which they brought with them; and though they never acquire the real and decided characteristics of John Bull, they put on as much of the appearance of them as makes them pass,

if not for Englishmen, at least as something very different from entire and unexported Scotsmen: and hence, whatever of Scotch, of Irish, or of foreign is discoverable, in London, is to be considered not as a primary, but as a secondary quality, of London manners; and though the wards be many and intricate, the only key by which there is even a chance of opening them, is the character of John Bull.

The imprint upon John is as deeply stamped as upon a Greek medal; and wherever you find him, whether in London or Calcutta, whatever be his rank, and whether he commands or obeys, he never can be mistaken. Every where he is a blunt matter-of-fact sort of being, very honest, but cold, and repulsive withal. He has the solidity of a material substance all over; and you can never fail to observe that wherever he is, or with whoever he associates, John always considers himself the foremost man,—nor will he take an advice or a lesson from any body that previously gives him a hint that he needs it. Wherever he is too, you can perceive that his own comfort—his own immediate personal comfort, is the grand object of all his exertions and all his wishes.

John Bull, if he thinks there is any chance of making a profit by it, will bargain with you at first sight; but before you can make an intimate

of him, you must court him as you would a lady; and even then, if you be romantic in your friendships, you soon discover that his friendship, like the love of a coquette, is not much worth the having. He gives you cold and polite civility before this courting, and he has not much more to give you after. There is such a mechanical formality, and such a frank avowal of that selfishness which other people may feel just as strongly, but which they are more careful to conceal, that you do not enjoy the luxury of an Englishman's feast with half the zest that you would a handful of dates with the Bedouin in the desert.

But while he is thus the coldest friend that you can imagine, he is the safest neighbour, and the most fair-dealing and generous enemy: while he keeps his own castle like a bashaw, he never thinks of invading yours. Comfort—meaning thereby the capacity of purchasing whatever he thinks will render himself snug, and independence—that is, feeling that he can do whatever he wishes, and say whatever he thinks,—being the grand objects with him, he cares not a straw for those adventitious and perhaps ideal distinctions that so much plague the rest of the world. His pride—and pride he has in great abundance—is not the pride of Haman; he cares not a straw though Mordecai the Jew should sit ever so long at his gate, his only solicitude being

that the said Mordecai shall not come within it, without the special permission of the owner, and that granted for something that shall conduce to the said owner's advantage or comfort.

His selfishness is not like the selfishness of most other nations: it does not go out after ideal whims and visionary fancies, but remains constant and attentive to himself. No man can devote himself more entirely or more successfully to the accumulation of wealth than John Bull, and no man can boast more of it after it is acquired; nor is any nation so little careful of kicking away and despising the ladder, if an unseemly one, by which it climbs to opulence, as the English. Let it be the humblest profession in the world—the sale of carrion, or the collecting of rags or rubbish, and that in consequence of success in it he is able to retire to his box, and set up his equipage in the purlieus of the Metropolis,—John Bull never despises the carrion or the dust; they are the best of all possible things, and, in his estimate, for the best of all possible reasons, "they made him a warm man, and he is now as snug as a lord."

His pride too is a plant of English growth; and though he boasts a good deal, his boasts are not of the kind met with in the rest of the world. You never hear him giving himself airs on account of his ancestry; for if John be what he calls warm,

he cares not a straw whether his grandfather was a duke or a dustman. "Every man is himself, and no man is his father," is John's theory; and upon this theory he acts very steadily. It is true that he does boast of being an Englishman,—that he does reckon his being born somewhere between Lowestoff and St. David's, and between Penzance and Berwick, as being a much more fortunate circumstance than if he had drawn his first breath in any other locality in the solar system. Old England is his, and he is Old England's: there is nothing like it in all the world; it can enrich the world, instruct the world, and, if properly provoked, conquer the world.

All this, however, consists in generalities; for if you descend to particulars, and press him closely upon these, you find that in this boasted England there is really nothing with which he is entirely satisfied except himself.

Mention the King to him—that very king whose throne it forms part of his general boast to support, and he instantly complains of the vast expense of the Royal household, the corruption of the Royal patronage, and the increasing, alarming, and overwhelming influence of the Crown; and tells you, that if there be not large and speedy retrenchments, curtailments, and restraints, England will soon cease to be England. Tell him of the two Houses

of Parliament, and he will quarrel with and condemn them both,—will complain that the one is filled by Court favour, and the other by party and corruption; and the probability is, that he will assure you that England would be all the better if there were no Parliament in existence. Talk to him about the Church—the enlightened hierarchy, the virtuous rectors, and the laborious curates, and he will come down upon you in a perfect tornado against tithes, and swear that every Churchman, from his Grace down to his Greasiness, is for no other use than eating up the produce of other men's labour. Mention public opinion to him, and the great advantage of spreading information rapidly over the country, and the chances are, that he will overlook the good, and complain "because falsehood travels in this way as rapidly as truth; and that people get rid of the nonsense of to-day, only to be misled by the nonsense of to-morrow." Mention the canals, and he will immediately tell you, that "they are profitable enough to the proprietors, but a horrible burden to the public at large." Notice even the smooth road upon which the wheels of his carriage trundle along, and he will growl, point to the turnpike-gate, and reply, "So they may, so they may indeed: just look at that!"

There is not, in short, a single institution in all England with which John is entirely pleased, nei-

ther is there an action or an improvement but he thinks might have been better. Nor are his complaints confined to what men have done,—the very elements come in for a share; and between year's end and year's end, John Bull's climate comes in for as large a share of his reprobation, as all those political and local grievances against which he is so loud. Even his own acquisitions do not please him when you come to particulars: though the riches he has accumulated be great, the burden of his song is, that himself and all about him are going completely to ruin; he is beggared, though in a palace with his coffers crammed,—and starving, though so well fed as that he can hardly waddle from one side of the room to the other. There is but one thing which, taken apart from the others and spoken of particularly, that he never hesitates to praise; and that is, the Navy—the Wooden Walls of Old England; and this he, perhaps, praises because he sees it not. But though John thus growls at every thing in the detail, it does not thence follow that his growling is useless, or that it is even an indication of a discontented spirit:—his care being chiefly directed to make himself comfortable, and in the majority of cases succeeding, and furthermore, setting no great value upon an act which he himself does not either perform or pay for,—he knows that

all his own immediate matters are really prospering, and so he discharges all his bile upon those which are external.

So far, indeed, is this growling propensity from being any disgrace or degradation to him, that it forms one of the most valuable parts of his character, and perhaps has contributed, and contributes more than any thing else, to make and to keep England what it is. It is probably this harsh and stubborn, but honest propensity of John Bull, which forms the bulwark of British grandeur abroad, and of British freedom at home; and probably, though the other divisions of the kingdom do not prize it as it ought to be prized, a great deal more of the good which really exists in these divisions is owing to the grumbling of John Bull, than to the accommodating philosophy of the Scotch, or the turbulent forwardness of the Irish. Circumstanced as they are now, neither of these nations seems to have energy and perseverance necessary for preserving even its own liberties, and promoting even its own improvements; and when a stand has to be made against encroachment, or a step has to be taken toward that which is good, a reference to the Journals of Parliament and to the petitions which are presented to both Houses will show that, in most cases, if not in every case, that stand is made and that step is taken by none other

than John Bull—the gruff, the selfish, the growling, but still the bold, the manly, the independent, the inflexible, the straight-forward and through-going John Bull. The energy of the Scottish people fumes and reeks away through the crannies of theory and metaphysics, and the wild fire of Ireland is speedily choaked by its own ashes; but if John Bull takes it into his head to stand, he stands like Atlas; or if it pleases him to move, his very weight makes him roll on and bear down all opposition like an avalanche.

Now this sturdiness arises from that feeling of individual independence, and that remarkable concentration towards himself, which the Englishman has in so great and peculiar a degree apart from that which he believes to be conducive to his interests; and if other people will identify their interests with his, he never scruples to take them along with him. John Bull has none of those little ligatures—such as the ties of clanship, which, while they unite other nations in small masses, paralyse their efforts as a great one. John is always at liberty to think and to choose for himself; and though his thoughts be not always the most profound, or his choices the most judicious, John is emperor of his own mind and his own castle, and entrenched in both, he can growl and grumble at all the world.

This individual independence gives to the disputes and quarrels of the English a degree of manliness and fairness quite unknown in the quarrels of any other people. Each individual, when roused or dared to the combat, is within himself the *posse comitatus* of a Sovereign and independent State. He is not a vassal to avenge the quarrel of his liege lord; neither is he an assassin, using the steel for his foe:—he is John Bull, standing up for himself, boldly, and in the face of all the world; fighting fairly and manfully to the last atom of his strength, and giving in just as manfully when he feels that he is worsted. Whatever may be the rank of the combatants, whether chimney-sweepers' apprentices or professional pugilists, (I decide not which is the more creditable vocation,) no sooner is the wager of a battle made—be stakes love or money—than a ring is formed, and umpires appointed, to see that each gets fair play. I am no advocate for war of any kind; I think single combat an alternative of fools at the best,—unless it be when it is for the gaining of a prize and the decision of gambling, and then every rational man must join in thinking that it is an alternative of knaves; but still, the regular and *bona fide* "sets-to" of the lower English are far more manly, and, if dignity could be predicated of such matters, far more dignified, than the rustic brawls

of any other country. They give one a much more exalted notion of human nature, even in its rudest states, than the pulling and hauling of the Scots, the thrashings of the Irish, the *schnicker schneeings* of the Dutch, the scratchings of the French, or the knife-drawings of the Portuguese—to say nothing of the *gougings* of Jonathan, or the *rip-fight* of the independent Colombians.

It is this individual independence too which makes the hand of the Englishman more dexterous in art, the word of the Englishman more trust-worthy in a bargain, and the scheme of the Englishman more adventurous and more successful in trade, than those of any other men in the world. The occupation, the profession, or the scheme, is identified with himself: he detaches himself from all else, and follows it with the steadiness of a machine,—follows it that he may arrive at that estimable *summum bonum* of John Bull—being able to pay his way, and caring for nobody. In consequence of this, the very avarice of the Englishman has a peculiar aspect. In all his eagerness after wealth—in all his approaches toward being a perfect miser, he never allows the idea of starvation to take possession of him. To amass wealth is perhaps more constantly his object, than it is the object of any other man; but it seldom or never becomes his ultimate object. He always looks beyond

to a time when he shall, not indeed squander, but enjoy, that which he is so assiduous in getting.

But though the sturdy independence of John Bull as an individual has many advantages, it is not without its evils even to himself; for in consequence of it, John cannot see the use of many intellectual and prudential qualities, which are appreciated and exercised by the rest of mankind. Resting his merit more in himself than in what he acquires or does, John leaves himself uninformed on many points, upon which it would be better that he had a little information. For instance, though his professional or business education be generally better than that of other men, he is as generally deficient in knowledge of other matters. He is always a well-constructed machine; but there are few instances in which he is a well-informed, rational being. He has great taste too in his profession; but he is very tasteless in all other matters. He is also very knowing in every thing that relates to his profession; but in all other matters he is liable to become the dupe of imposition. This evidently does not arise from any want of capacity for acquiring information and taste, and circumspection; because when the road to his grand object lies through these, he not only can acquire, but actually does acquire, as great a proficiency in them as in ordinary cases he does of matters that are

more mechanical. But still, in consequence of this devotedness to self, and to a single pursuit for the sake of self, the majority of Englishmen, and even the majority of those in the Metropolis, have very crude notions of general principles; and, out of their own little spheres, they are constantly exposed to the cheats and impositions of quacks—a description of vermin far more numerous and successful in the British Metropolis, than in any other city of the world.

Such are a few traces—faint, but I hope faithful traces, of John Bull's character; and making allowance for the slight changes that are produced by foreign importations, they form the substratum of the London character, Babylonish as it is. Those peculiarities must, indeed, be stronger in London than they are throughout the other parts of England; for widely as it is spreading, and great and rapid as is the increase of its inhabitants, nobody either comes to London, or remains in it, as a matter of free sentimental and intellectual choice. The higher classes throng to it on account of its fashions and its dissipation—because there are more to be seen, and especially more to see them there, than in their stately but secluded residences in the country; the middle classes throng to it in order to obtain a share of its wealth—to draw a prize in the lottery of specu-

lation, or of trade; and there the former classes are gathered together from the hope, that in so general a mart for labour their services will be sought after and rewarded. But, notwithstanding all its allurements to ambition and hope, and all its gratifications to the senses, it is doubtful whether any of them look upon London in the light of even a permanent terrestrial abode. It is their inn, as it were,—the place to which they resort for the transaction of business, and all its enjoyments partake more of the nature of tavern carousals than of the calm delights of home. One meets with so much that is strange, that it is not easy to divest oneself of the idea of being also a stranger; and therefore, every time that one comes in contact with society, the transaction is wound up and completed, as if one were never to enter the same society again. Every thing about one is so great and so changeable, that there is no fellowship in it; and after a residence of twenty years, one is the same uninterested and uninteresting spectator as before. The eyes and the ears are so constantly strained after novelty, and one novelty crowds so fast after another, that the heart, even were it so disposed, has not leisure to become affected.

But if such a society be unfavourable to the existence of the more intense feelings—if it tend

to make people cold and heartless, it is not without its advantages. Where the heart is deeply affected, the observation never can be very vigorous; and for this reason, a man may know more and judge better, not only of all external matters—all subjects of speculation and criticism, but of human nature in general, and human character in particular instances, while a mere spectator amid the crowds of London, than if he were in a place where every face that he met sent a pulse through his heart, and brought a glow over his cheek. The same causes, too, which take off the scales of feeling—it may be of prejudice—from the eyes of the observing individual, remove the cloaks of concealment from those whom he observes; and the very ignorance and consequent indifference which each has toward all whom he meets, together with the politeness which is necessary to render a heartless society bearable, throw the gates of experience as wide as any man can wish; and thus, though London may not be the place in which one may best study the poetry of one species, it is the one in which to study the prose,—just as, though it be not the place to exchange sympathies, it is the one in which to enjoy comforts and full independence.

CHAPTER V.

THE CORPORATION.

Being mounted in their best array,
Upon a car, and who but they!
And follow'd by a world of tall lads,
That merry ditties troll, and ballads,
They ride with many a good-morrow;
Crying, Hey for our town! through the borough.

BUTLER.

MANY and mixed as are the elements of which London is composed, there is perhaps none of them so perfectly Babylonish in greatness and in confusion, as its Corporation. That rises over all the other Corporations of England and of the world, as the Tower of Babel did over the mud hovels of the provincial Chaldees. Compared with the ample personages which fill all its ranks, they of "the Athens" are no better than a set of miserable scarecrows; and it sometimes happens that in wealth both of person and of purse, a single Alderman would furnish ample materials for provosting the Northern City during a century; while the Burgo-

masters of Amsterdam, notwithstanding that their doublets and so forth are as many times repeated as the folds of hide in the shield of Ajax, would be outweighed and outmeasured by a Liveryman of the Ward of Portsoken or Cripplegate. The most broad and beautiful enjoyment of all the good things of this world are so palpably stamped upon every thing connected with it, that one has only to look upon the Corporation of London, in order to pronounce with unerring certainty that there, and there only, is to be found the paradise of the bowels. Hence, perhaps, it is that it has derived its name of Corporation,—every man being, *in corpore suo*, complete and comfortable; and from the Lord Mayor himself down to the vergers and mace-bearers, nay, even to the horses which drag the slow majesty of the state coach, and to the wheels upon which that coach is supported, and the cherubs that adorn its pannels, every thing is an emblem—an accurate and appropriate emblem—of the most ample and uniform good cheer. The very dragons which stand sentinel at the dexter and sinister sides of the civic shield, and prevent the cross of St. George, and the dagger of Sir William Walworth, from getting into the hands of other beasts, are by no means such lanky and ill-fed supporters as one may find hedging in the escutcheon of some starveling lord,—they are plump and com-

fortable, and, if denuded of their beaks and their claws, they might pass for a brace of chosen and appropriate geese, worthy of the Mansion-house board at Michaelmas, when geese and Lord Mayors are in the very bud and beauty of their greenness. Even in the crest of the Civic arms there is a breadth, a quietude, a repose, and an indication of enjoyment, which cannot be perceived in the battle-axes, and scissor-blades, and horned moons, which throng in the ranks of common heraldry. The city of London hoists aloft, over all her honours, the great state night-cap, as substantial and as soft as if therein the ample sconce of her first magistrate were to be pillowed during the whole twelvemonths of his super-kingly sway. I say super-kingly; because, from Aldgate Pump to Temple Bar, the Lord Mayor of London is more of a monarch than the King of England; while, when his trained bands are mustered, each grasping the shining steel, and eager for the charge, not against men merely, but against whatever moves in the air, on the earth, or under the waters—has wings, or feet, or fins—he is more mighty in his state, better supported by those about him, and more certain of triumph, than any Emperor in the world. Even the City motto bespeaks or partakes of the mild and broad comfort of the genuine Civic enjoyments; and when the worthies of the various Wards

have triumphed over solids and over fluids, till, like so many Alexanders, they have left not another world of flesh or of wine to be won, what can be more appropriate, what can be more pious, what can be more necessary, than for them to chaunt, as their parting stave, "*Domine dirige nos*,—our way to our own homes!"

It is not in its mere state—in its external pomp, however, that the Great Babylonian Corporation rises in proud majesty over every other Corporation in the world. The thing is really mightier than it looks; and even the state barges and coaches, which have laid the gold-beater and the varnish-maker under heavier contributions than those of any other municipal establishment in the world, are absolutely nothing in comparison of that latitude of power and longitude of wisdom, of which they are the corporeal shadows. Politically speaking, the great Corporation of London is the very type and pattern of the British Constitution; and as Britain has been changed and conquered, while London has not, it may very fairly be argued that London is not only the elder born, but is also that without which the other could not have existed.

Like the British Constitution, the Corporation of London is made up of three estates; like Britain, the Corporation of London has its dependent colonies—the ninety-one chartered Companies of

Freemen; like Britain, London has its own ecclesiastical establishment, and, like Britain, London has its armament for war,—it has those solid and substantial heroes, who, from the time of Sir William Walworth, the Mayor who smote down the rebel in Smithfield, to the almost equally renowned Mr. John Gilpin, who lost the *spolia opima* in the hurry of a retreat, as masterly as that of Moreau, and almost as disastrous as that of Moore, have been as great—as physically great—in armour and in arms, as any heroes of whom time remembers the achievements.

In the kingly state of its Mayors, London has a security of efficiency and greatness, to which not England herself can lay claim. The Civic monarch can never be a mewling infant, or a doating old man, at the mercy of designing courtiers. He comes into office in the beam and breadth of manhood—when no swaddling band could girdle even a limb of him; and he retires from office before age can have made him feeble, or power tyrannical. Reformers have dreamt dreams and seen visions of Annual Parliaments; but—O the moles! they have, in poring into the lumber-houses of Time and Oblivion, forgotten that which stood proud and confessed before their own eyes: they have forgotten the Annual King—that grand *ne plus ultra* of political perfection; and though they have, hither-

to, overlooked it, I hope that they will now take the hint, abandon all minor matters, and cleave to this. The wisdom of it is more plain and palpable than that of any doctrine which they have hitherto broached, and the foundation of it is more firmly laid in fact, than that of the Annual Parliaments is in the shadowy darkness of the Anglo-Saxon times. When Cartwright, the great Apostle of the year, first propounded and promulgated his annual doctrine, he had no better foundation upon which to rest than the title of an old book, "*De Breva Parliamentaria Rediviva*," which, as every body knows, he translated, "Of the Restoring of Short Parliaments." But had he left the classic ground of Queen Square, Westminster, and journeyed as far as King Street, Cheapside, he might not only have beheld that idol of his soul, an Annual Parliament, but the still more desirable idol of an Annual King.

But the Emperor of Babylon the Great is not only more perfect in his day and generation than the monarch of England,—he is, like him, lord both of the water and the land. He is not only the head of the civil government within the City, but first Commissioner of the Lieutenancy, perpetual Coroner and Escheator within the liberties of London and Borough of Southwark; Chief Justice of Oyer and Terminer, and Gaol delivery at Newgate; Judge of the Court of Wardmote at the

election of Aldermen; Conservator of the Rivers Thames and Medway; perpetual Commissioner in all affairs relating to the river Lee; and, as his offices rise and broaden in majesty like those of

"Dalhousie, the great god of war,"

so they soften into a like soft cadence at the close. He is not indeed,

"Lieutenant-colonel to the Earl of Mar;"

but he has a far more appropriate office,—he is Chief Butler to the King at all coronations,—as if no one could so well direct a general jubilee of the bowels, as he, in and about whom these are in a state of perpetual jubilation.

These are high and honourable offices, and highly and honourably are they filled. No hero of the world can be better adapted either for making a breach, or for filling up one, that the civil monarch of the mighty Babylon. An ordinary Lord Mayor could be cut into six Napoleons, twelve Wellingtons, and I wot not how many Nelsons; and if Hamlet, when he chose to moralize upon Royal clay, had turned his thoughts, not to an Emperor of the starveling Romans, but to one of the substantiality of the Great Babylon, he would never have so much as hinted at that clay being employed "to stop a bung-hole," but would have swelled the simile to the thing signified, and at once declared that it would fill the whole cask.

Into the nature of the functions of this great man of state, *per mare per terram*, it is unnecessary for me to enter. They stand recorded on the pages of books, and in the faces of men; no one can dwell within the limits of his authority during the changes of a year, without knowing and admiring their sublimity and their substance. When he yokes the steeds to the chariot of his power, they and it have such indications of majesty and strength about them, that you are instantly impressed with the idea that he is going forth a conqueror; and when his sails are unfurled, and his oars banked, whether the voyage be from Kew to Richmond, or from Wapping Stairs to Rochester Bridge, there is more of pomp and ceremony—more of the true sublime about it, than there ever was in the Doge of Venice wedding the wild waves of the Adriatic, or in an ordinary navigator going forth to girdle the world.

No Emperor of Babylon, the city of the Chaldees, —no, not even Nebuchadnezzar himself, who first conquered all people, and kindreds, and tongues, and languages, and then set up the golden image in the plain of Dura, commanding them to worship it, could be more "every inch a King," than him of Babylon the Great. Like those prototypes, he has dominion over the circumcised remnant, as well as over the heathen nations; like them, the idols of

his worship are idols of gold; and like Nebuchadnezzar, he is annually driven from his kingdom, not indeed to "eat grass like oxen," but, by a more sublime and satisfactory process, to eat oxen like grass.

According to the ancient custom, the Babylonian ruler was chosen from and by the whole mass of the citizens, who assembled for that purpose in a general *Folk-mote* at Paul's Cross; and it is a singular coincidence, that just six years after the burgesses of the modern Athens, and of Scotland generally, lost the power of choosing their municipal rulers, the Great Babylon became a closer Corporation than it had been in preceding times. In 1475, the general *Folk-mote* was abolished by authority, and the election of the Lord Mayor vested in the Aldermen, the Common Council, and the Master, Wardens and Liverymen of the City Companies. That the time at which the citizens of the two extremities of the country were deprived of their franchise should have been the same, is exceedingly curious; and, as no connexion can be supposed to have existed between their governments, which were then in a state of open hostility, it would be worth while to inquire what were the circumstances which led to this general disenfranchisement, and whether the causes by which it was produced had any effect in bring-

ing about that re-action which has given so much importance to individual men and individual exertions in modern times.

But though the Babylonians were thus deprived of the general power of election, the system was still left so wide as to form a very complete barrier against party compact and individual corruption; and though it be not possible to find an annual succession of very wise men to fill the Civic chair, such has been the zeal of the electors to preserve the considerable portion of freedom that remains to them, that the Lord Mayor of London has generally, in so far as his judgment has served him, been a liberal man. It must be admitted, that there is something in the very fact of his being first magistrate of the first city in the world, which of itself prompts him to be liberal; and as care is taken in the election of the Aldermen, to whom he always belongs, that his fortune shall be such as to place him above the temptation of ordinary bribery, there is, perhaps, little fault to be found with the manner in which he is elected,—more especially as all the acts of his government are liable to be scrutinized by the Common Council, who, though certainly not the wisest, are about the most headstrong and clamorous set of men upon the face of the earth. In former times, the Lord Mayor was a partaker in that divinity with which

kings are fenced round, to guard them against the touch and profanation of the vulgar; and there have been instances in which citizens have been beheaded for attempting to resist his authority, and also where sheriffs have been fined for kneeling at the same shrine with them. But somehow or other, that divinity has been allowed to depart; so that now, either sheriff or citizen, if he goes not too roughly about it, may "take Sackerson by the chain," with perfect impunity.

The second estate of the Babylonian Corporation consists of twenty-six Aldermen of the different Wards. These constitute the Babylonian nobility, and both in purse and in person they would outweigh double the number of nobles of any other sort. Had Cæsar been King of Britain, these had formed his privy council, as a matter of course: they are "sleek-headed men that sleep o' nights;" and one would just as soon look for a seditious combination among St. Paul's and the Guildhall, and the Mansion-house, as among any three Aldermen of the City,—those of the Ward of Farringdon Without excepted, who have, of late years at least, been remarkable for the angularity of their visages, the lankness of their stomachs, and the consequent restlessness of their dispositions. It is not, however, in the substantial breadth of their own proper corporations, and the

capacious depth of their pockets, alone, that the semblance of nobility inheres in those Babylonian sages? Each of them is "justice of the peace and coram,"—having dominion over ten times as many human beings as the proudest Baron in days of yore; and, compared with the peers of Parliament, they are, in authority as well as in affluence, as giants to children. Your parliamentary peer is always held as being the more honourable, the farther he is personally removed from that ancestor, in consequence of whose doings, good or bad, the peerage was conferred. They are productions of nature,—have no more merit in the title which they bear, than a turnip has in its shape or a tulip in its colour. A man is born a peer, and though he be the wisest or most foolish of his generation, his *status* in society is not thereby altered a single jot. But no man is born an alderman,—such an honour as it is, it is an honour to be won. The candidate must acquire wealth, and eat his way through many and strong fortifications of the Babel; and thus the two grand Civic points are made sure,—a Babylonian peer can always keep the dignity of the city in its chosen characteristic, and he can always afford to do so.

The third estate are the Common Councillors,—the Commons as it were,—the speaking part of the Corporation, who, though they open their mouths

as wide as the men of more ample volume and honour, are not yet fed up to the proper weight of Babylonian magistracy. The others are the rulers of Babylon; but these are the great Babylon itself; and whosoever shall listen to their oratorical displays, will behold a mightier and more miraculous confusion of language than took place when the aspirants of the ancient prototype were confounded. Among them of old it required the blending together of many tongues, ere the motley speech could be rendered unintelligible; but the moderns go to work by an improved method,—for, out of one language—ay, out of somewhat less than one language, they contrive to mix up an oratory, the niceties of which not all the scholars, versed in all the languages of the world, could at times so unravel, as to get out a single glimpse of meaning.

This extraordinary power of combination and confusion is by no means confined to what is spoken,—it goes into the current of action, and impresses its genuine characters upon every thing which emanates from, or belongs to, the Babylonian Corporation. Their Emperor does not, like the Emperors of the East, keep himself apart from the rest in cold and haughty state; neither do their peers, like the peers of the West, retire into their own chamber of privileges, and close the

doors upon the untitled Commons. No doubt a chair—an ample and a strong chair, is furnished for the ruler of the year; and a board, elevated as it were the shopboard in a tailor's manufactory, is provided for the chiefs of Portsoken and Cripplegate, and Cheap and the other Wards; but when the confusion of tongues begins—when the King's English is bent into every shape, and hammered to every variety of sound, the whole equally help forward the confusion.

This Babylonian fulness and force of contrast is no where more strikingly evinced than in that pile wherein the Chaldeans, the Soothsayers, and all the other wise men of the body corporate display their powers in forensics and in feastings—carve by turns the King's English and fat bucks and beeves, till, in the disjointed bones and separated fragments, all trace and all knowledge of the original form and structure of both be equally lost. This hall—the Guildhall of the City of London, is a *ne plus ultra* in every thing thereabouts. It forms, and very appropriately forms, the termination of King Street; you cannot get beyond it, and therefore, whenever you pass into the street, you are constrained to lift up your eyes and wonder at it as the *chef d'œuvre* and finish of all the systems of architecture that the chisel of builder could fashion, or the imagina-

tion of artist devise. The ancient Hindoo is said to have borrowed the structure of his temples—the wonders of Elephanta and Elora, from glimpses of his paradise, which have been given to him by Vishnû, during his nine successive incarnations; and Elephanta and Elora are thence said to have derived their sublimity. The ancient Egyptians constructed their temples and raised their pyramids after the model of the rocks of Ambu Geshan, and they again have the attributes of immensity and duration which belong to those giant fragments. The Greeks reared their structures upon principles of philosophy and taste, at a time when the passions and the genius of man were his gods, and when legitimate worship was the adoration of whatever, in fancy or in fact, the human powers could create; the temples of the Greeks are therefore the perfection of terrestrial beauty. The more stern and savage tribes of the North, again, came from the black gloom of those forests in which the blood of man was shed to gratify the cruelty of gods, of whom a more kindly and airy-minded people would have been ashamed to make devils; they could therefore see no grandeur and no sublimity, except in swelling boles, interarching branches, and clustering leaves —the gloom, the coldness, the death-like silence of a forest, ever dripping with dews and impervious to

the beams of the sun; and hence the giant oak and the witching elm were the types of their architecture.

The wise-men of Babylon have done mightier things than these: in this, the model and masterpiece of their taste, they have contrived to blend into one mighty mass the architecture of the Indians, the Egyptians, the Greeks, and the Goths; to which they have added a style that is peculiarly and properly their own, and which, though it be in perfection only here, may be traced in every hall and in every building, over which either the great Corporation, or any of its subservient *corpuses*, has a veto,—the architecture of pies and custards. This is quite natural—as it should be; there is no evidence that Indian, Egyptian, Greek, or Goth, set rubric upon the front of his dwelling-house, the deeds which were done within; but, as the citizens of the great Babylon proclaim upon the sign-board what is doing or done in the house, congruity requires that their public buildings should have the same kind of symbolical exterior,—that where they consume the labours of the pastry-cook, there should be some type of his art to invite them thither; and that, as men fare more sumptuously, in greater numbers, and to a greater extent, in this same Guildhall, than in any other fabric between Jupiter and Saturn, (when the one is in the su-

perior and the other in the inferior part of its orbit,) it is not fitting that such a breadth of substantial joy should be hidden even under the ample roof of this grand temple of the Gulosic divinities, but that the beam out of the timber and the stone out of the wall should proclaim the fervency and the extent to which these are adored.

Nor is this perfect congruity—this moral keeping between the sign and the thing signified, confined to those buildings and objects which are devoted to Civic purposes. In house and in hall, upon church and upon monument, the workings of the graving-tool tell, and the dull block and duller stone proclaim, the fullness and fatness of Civic enjoyment, and breathe out all the consequent expressions of quietude and repose. Take any Babylonian temple, from St. Dunstan's in the West to St. Leonard's Shoreditch, and as far about and around as you choose to go, and just look at the winged buttocks of beef, legs of mutton, and hands of pork, which the truly Babylonian genius has moulded into cherubim and seraphim over the door-ways; and if the most sleep-compelling yawn do not steal over you, soft as the falling foot of Night, then Morpheus and you have no consanguinity, and you may go range with the fox or sing with the nightingale. Even the genius of Wren himself could not raise the solid Babylonian clay to the airy lightness of

celestial shapes. Vitruvius and Palladio lent him the measuring line and the compasses, by which to gauge the dimensions of his columns and set off the angles of his pediments; but for the sweet little cherubs which hang upon his friezes, and wanton in the canopies of his niches, he had no type save the infant Aldermen of Vintry and Candlewick; and therefore upon St. Bride's, St. Paul's, Bow, and every where else that a graven image of an ethereal sprite sports a cheek or displays a wing, it may safely be said that the great Babylon possesses the fattest of angelic similitudes.

Nor are the monumental sculptures behind in this comfortable obesity: this is true of them every where; but no where is it so completely and universally true, as in that Hall where the Citizens assemble to eat their dinners, or to choose their representatives. No matter to whom the monument may happen to be created, or what may be the allegorical or other sculptures with which it is adorned; for the idea first in the thoughts and ever at the hearts of both patrons and patronized—the grand subject which all those masses of matter in reality perpetuate, is, the chosen *lares*, the *genio loci* of the place,—superabundant good cheer—a feast of fat things, full, very full of marrow. To your left of the inner door—the door which leads you from the hall of jubilation to the hall of justice,

and beyond that to the hall of the confusion of tongues, stands William Beckford, Esq., every inch a Mayor,—so soft, yet so superlatively massy, that you never for a moment suspect him of being the real author of that speech, for the delivery of which he has been rewarded with the goodly gown and cauliflower wig, which give so much of the *inertia* of a man of peace to this great mountain of marble. To his right stands the great Earl of Chatham, habited like a senator of Rome, and reposing his left hand upon an exceedingly well carved effigy of—the rudder of the City barge: around him crowd the substantial Graces of Ludgate Hill and Fleet Street, which are said in the descriptions to represent Commerce, and Britannia, and the City of London. Commerce is engaged in flirtation with the patriotic statesman, at which the mighty Babylon, most appropriately crowned with a *horn-work*, is looking a little gruff; and four *infant* Quarters of the World are emptying into the lap of Britannia the fragments of a City feast. So, indeed, they may; for every figure in the group appears to have fared so well, as that there is not the least need for saving the crumbs. Opposed to the monument of the Earl of Chatham stands, and very properly stands, that of his eloquent son, which a stranger would be apt to mistake for him of Walcheren—so substantial are the lineaments and so stilly the features of the de-

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parted orator. All else about him is in fine keeping; and the Mercury, were it not for the little bat-wings and Mambrino's helmet, might be mistaken for an apotheosis of that generous model of Aldermen—Sir William Curtis. In another quarter they have stumbled upon the immortal Nelson; but finding him too ethereal for their purpose, they have again had recourse to the nymphs of the Fleet, and generously taught the art of sign-painting to as substantial a dame as ever monopolized two-thirds of the foot pavement between Bride Lane and Temple Bar. Even here they have not forgot themselves; for they have made old Neptune a liveryman of the City, and predicted that the monument will be co-existent with the Great Babylon itself. All these, however, are but approximations to the true Babylonian taste, and the genuine Babylonian models; but there are two pieces of choice workmanship, which are so interwoven with the history of the Corporation, that the same shades of night hang over their origin, and though there cannot be the least doubt that they are the types of two *quondam* Lords Mayor, yet their names have slid from the remembrance even of the City Remembrancer; and the wondering multitude, not knowing what else to call them, have bestowed upon them the names of Gog and Magog. The most remarkable circumstance about these two

figures, is the fact of Sir Walter Scott's having taken them as his model for the two giants, which are so well described in his poem of Don Roderic,—

"Grim sentinels against the upper wall,
Of molten bronze, two statues hold their place."

Gog and Magog are not of bronze indeed,—that being all at the other end of the Hall, where the hustings are erected; but still, whoever will compare those marvellous figures with the description given by the poet, must at once allow that he could have had his eye or his mind upon none other.

Indeed, every thing about this great Hall speaks of Babylon; and when an ordinary man enters it in the glory of its Civic display, either of the tongue or of the teeth, he feels as though he were entering not a new land merely, but a new state of being. The essences of things—the *semina rerum*, are so jumbled together—the Hall itself is so much Gothic, and so much not Gothic—the sly doors for admitting cooks and butlers, are so numerous and so conveniently situated — the thronging citizens are so independent in their own rotundity, and so heedless whose sides they may punch, or upon whose toes they may tread—and those appropriate and perennial Aldermen, Gog and Magog, Esquires, already mentioned, look down upon and govern the whole with so grave

and characteristic majesty;—that if you have been dabbling in the shallow waters of modern, ay, or of ancient taste, you must come forth of them and wipe you dry, before you can understand either the things or the men congregated together, at this great safety-valve of Babylonian unquenchable fire,—a safety-valve which is of unspeakable advantage; for, were it not allowed from time to time to puff away, of a surety there is in the men who resort hither as much of the matter of fire as might endanger not merely the safety of one State, but the stability of a world or of a system.

The eloquence and the enjoyment of which Gog and Magog are alternately made spectators, are well worthy of the choicest words that could be picked out of the most copious dictionary; but they are by much too important for coming in at the end of a chapter already somewhat lengthened, and therefore they must in the mean time be delayed.

CHAPTER VI.

BABYLONIAN MEN AND WOMEN.

"God created *man* in his own image: in the image of God created He *him*; male and female created He *them*."

THE BIBLE.

ALTHOUGH I have seen meet to erect this text of Scripture, as a sort of breast-work to defend what I mean to advance in this chapter, no one needs, on that account, put himself prematurely into the attitude of repose, as though a formal homily were to be inflicted upon him; and although I have directed the printer to mark in Italics those words in that text, which are said to have given some divines of the severer caste a leaning toward Mahometism, no fair reader must thence infer that I would even hint at the total mortality of beings so lovely, or surmise that those of our race, who are the most angelic both in form and in mind, in this world, are to be deemed less meet companions of their kindred angels in the next, than they of less lovely mien

and less heavenly temperament. My only object is to introduce a few paragraphs descriptive of the general character of the men and the women of the Babylon, before I proceed to the dissection and delineation of the several classes whereof the mighty total is composed.

Notwithstanding all those who are continually adding to it by birth and subtracting from it by death—all who are arriving and imparting to it, in whole or in part, the manners and the characters of other places, observation may trace, in the moving and mingling mass of the Babylonian population, a character which belongs to themselves, and which cannot be predicated of the people of any other locality. But it is a character, the lines of which are so broad and so blended with each other, that the tracing of them is no easy matter. In a small society—some dozen, some hundred, or even some thousand people, one can take the individuals apart, study them, and from that study compose a character of the whole; but who shall take the detail of a million—a million too, of which the half would be gone ere the tenth part could be understood? As little is it possible to arrive at the Babylonian character, by examining systems of education and ranks and habits of life. It is a mass which cannot be decomposed—a whole which no one can separate into

parts; and therefore, unless some general notion of it can be obtained, one stands a chance of describing a man of some particular province, instead of making the least approximation to what man is in London: but yet, without some such previous knowledge, (call it previous guess, if you will,) the detail would be deficient in clearness, and destitute of unity.

It is not enough to say that the general Babylonian character is the absence of all individual peculiarity and importance—a losing of the component parts of the compound which they form; for the very aggregation of so many human beings gives them a something uncommon—a something, too, which they could never acquire in a smaller, more united, and more scrutinizing society. In a place of such moral and social freedom, a hundred dead weights are taken off, and a man moves toward the gratification of his passions and his appetites, with a security and a speed that are no where else to be equalled. Notwithstanding the magnitude of the place, and the abundance of every thing that can administer even to the most fictitious desires of London society, there is a sameness, a dullness, and a routine about it, which render the more airy and imaginative faculties of man of comparatively little avail, and close the books of fancy and curiosity

in the same proportion as those of comfort and enjoyment are laid open. To the inhabitants of London, it is almost in vain that the year brings round its magic changes; for they know not of the breathing spring, the blooming summer, the rich autumn, and the ruin-spreading winter. To them it boots little whether the south wind blows soft its odoury breath, or the chilly north-east covers the land with its spiculæ of ice. The alternations with which they are conversant, are darkness and light, cold and heat, moisture and drought; and such is the extent of their artifice and contrivance, that the greatest even of these is very much diminished. Thus one whole series of excitements, and of excitements, too, which have a very powerful influence in the formation of the human character, cease to operate; and the permanent inhabitants of London—the majority of its inhabitants, are thus left without a schooling which is in continual exercise, in places where man has not his own works constantly between him and the operations of Nature.

But there is another privation: the inhabitants of London are, in a great measure, cut off from all intercourse with, and consequently from all knowledge of, Nature herself. What Cowper said in a moral point of view, is as true, if not more true, in a physical one—

"God made the country, and man made the town."

Whatever presents itself to the Londoner, is in some shape or other the handy-work of man, and except in his own species, and it is but partial even there, he never beholds the unsophisticated or unaltered workings of man's Maker. The plants upon which he looks are exotic and forced, and if they were not kept alive by artifical means they would die; the animals which meet his eye are either fattened for the slaughter, or trained for pleasure; the stones are chiselled into artificial shapes; the clay is moulded into forms; the earth has all been shovelled into a new place; the course of the water has been changed; and even the mire through which he wades in winter, and the dust by which he is clouded in summer, are things of his own manufacture. There is nothing, in short, except the celestial bodies, and these he does not see very often, upon which he can turn his views, but suggests to him the necessity of human labour, not only for the value, but for the very existence of things. This necessarily shuts him out from many of the finest sources of speculation—from much of what is philosophical, and more of what is fanciful; and leaves him no resource but to fall down and worship the idols which his own fingers have framed.

There is a third privation: that utter insignificance of the individual to which I have already alluded, and that absence of all disposition to pry into the conduct and character of his neighbours, which makes the inhabitant of such a place so very civil as a man of business, and so very suave as a common acquaintance, strike at the very root of those passions which give to the human character its strength both of good and of ill, and make him as insignificant in the mental part he bears, as in the social. No doubt the inhabitant of such a place has his external excitements; and those excitements are very numerous, and seem, to one not long accustomed to them, charming and varied without end. The picture which is set before him is a great, a glowing, and a crowded one; but it wants *chiar' oscuro* and repose: and they who have once known other things, and have afterwards been for any length of time forced to find their pleasures in crowds and spectacles—ay, and even in Courts and in Kings, can tell, with the sickness of satiety and the bitterness of *ennui*, how much of real satisfaction is in them.

Such are some of the leading circumstances or necessities which contribute to the formation of the Babylonian character; and as they are negative—an abstraction of character as it exists in other places, they clear the way for the positive circum-

stances which form the character that predominates in this mighty metropolis, — a character which might be summed up in few words—a desire to gratify the appetites and passions, and exertions to obtain the means of those gratifications.

Those who are born and educated in London, have no idea of any wealth or possession except what is produced by labour or business of some kind or other; and they who are attracted to London soon become converts to the same belief. The means of sensual gratification are every where so inviting, and, if the price can be afforded, so accessible, that the cupidity of gaining and the luxury of spending come together; and come with so much force, that if they come early in life they prevent all change in the sequel, and even if they come late, they soon obliterate whatever of more airy impression and tendency there may have been before.

Where there is so much of competition, success cannot be obtained unless by the most diligent and persevering attention, and by the most civil and courteous deportment: nor are these alone sufficient; for there is an emulation of talent—a strife for excellence, arising partly from the abstractions to which I have alluded, and partly from the necessity to which I now allude, that always has given, and always will continue to give, to the productions of London invention and London art, a

superiority over those of every other place: but this very circumstance, which in itself commands the admiration of other people, has by no means an elevating effect upon the artists themselves. The division of labour has in all cases reduced the man in a general intellectual point of view, as much as it has enhanced the value of that which his labour produces; and in the eye of sound philosophy—that philosophy which looks over the possession and trappings of men to their heads, the rude peasant, who constructs all the clumsy coverings of his body and conveniences of his hut, contemplating the volume of Nature in the intervals of his labour, is a being of a much more exalted character than he who strings a pearl or polishes a diamond, or even than he who writes a book, as most modern books—and this one, *of course*, among the rest—are written. The consequence of all this is, that in the particular profession to which the Londoner is accustomed, he is more skilful, more assiduous, and more complaisant to those with whom he does business, than the man of any other city; but when you once divert him from that, his notions are more crude, and his information is more shallow and limited. When he foregoes his desk and his calculations, he may make a politician—as politics are taught; a philosopher—as philosophy is done; a poet—as poets sing by Babel's streams; or a wit—

as wits are cracked in her clubs and coffee-houses; but you cannot bring him to the profound of any thing—unless you allow that *profound* is the exact synonyme of *bathos*. If you turn round upon him, and bid him tell you how his politics are to enlighten the world, he will refer you to Capel Court, to Guildhall, or to Brooks's or White's, according as his tuition has been with Jews, or Aldermen, or Sages of St. Stephen's. If you cross-question him as to his philosophy, you will find that he can go no farther than his card. If you hint to him that the trees of his song have the wrong leaf, and the flowers bloom at the wrong season, the chance is, that he will refer you to his little conservatory at Hampstead or Balham Hill; and if you doubt the zest of his wit, he will tell you after what cook of the club or buffoon of the stage it was copied.

But you have no wish to put to him any such impertinent question, or to make to him any such impertinent remark; for there is in a genuine Londoner a disposition to be civil, which instantly disarms your ridicule of even the most ridiculous of his partialities. Whatever he is, he is not a pedant; and if his own mental powers and his own mental cultivation be not of the very highest value, he does not set a high value upon these, either in himself or in others. It is not in such matters that he

looks for distinction: to have and to enjoy, are the objects of his comfortable ambition; and these once obtained, all else with him is of minor moment. He is selfish; but his selfishness is not of that obtrusive character which continually thrusts itself in the way of other people. No doubt he struggles hard for his bone; but when he once gets it, he gnaws it with an urbanity that disarms all opposition.

So strong is this character upon him, that you can tell a genuine Londoner wherever you meet him; and you are much more certain of your man in the mountains of the North, or on the plains of the East, than you are in Cheapside or Ludgate Hill. It is the same in whatever he may be doing: devotion, debauchery, attention to his family, desertion of his family,—all sorts of virtues, all sorts of vices, are stamped with the air of business. You can never say that his heart *is not* in the matter,—because you can never prove an *alibi*, by finding it about any thing else; but just as little can you say that his heart *is* in the matter, for you are unable to discover it there. It is, however, much more pleasant for you, and perchance also much more pleasant for himself; for the heart is both a turbulent and a brittle thing, and it is wayward in the management and painful in the fracture; and if one's own mere personal comfort be the sole

or the grand object of one's existence, then the less heart one has, or the less one exercises it, one's comfort has the less chance of being interrupted. Thus centred in and devoted to himself, the true Babylonian is, when abroad, the most incurious of men,—or if he show any curiosity, it is generally to find out whether he can, in other places, obtain the same comforts of which he has the command at home; and thus he is less changed—less improved, or deteriorated, or whatever else it may be, than any other human being. It is true, that he cannot carry the enjoyments of London with him to Caithness, or even to Cornwall; but there, or any where else, he fills himself so full of the thought and the remembrance of them, that he has no room to retain any thing else.

Considering these, and all the other circumstances, which, in a place like the Great Babylon, tend to limit the speculative powers of man, and force him (no very hard or unpleasant task) to bend the whole of his powers toward sensual gratification, one might at first suppose that there would be the same tendency to diminish the interest of woman. But the case is not so: the bodily, and more especially the mental difference of the two sexes, is such, that very often what stunts and deteriorates the character of the one, gives breadth and beauty to that of the other.

It is possible that a good deal of the superiority of the female character—or, if you will have it so, of the female appearance, as it exists in London, depends upon the immense crowd of people that is there collected, and the artificial and ornamented state of every thing in and about the place. Whatever may be its influence upon the energies and the faculties of man, there is no denying that a crowd is both the nursery and the paradise of woman. A person of a fanciful turn of mind might have recourse to his similes, in default of philosophy; and compare man to a hardy plant, which requires open space, and free and bracing air, and woman to some delicate flowery shrub, of which the leaves put not forth their greenness, and the flower-cups display not their tints and diffuse not their fragrance, unless they be protected: but it is enough for me to state the plain fact, and leave others to weave the cobwebs of similitude.

But although London affords incontrovertible evidences of the fact which I have now stated, it is not so set down in the songs of the poets and the stories of the romance-writers. Those airy personages seldom, however, describe the world that exists: they first make a little world of their own, in which fancy is altogether at variance with the fact; and then they palm that world upon their more sober brethren, as the one which really

exists. The wood-nymphs and the damsels of the desert, which sound so sweetly in the notes of the bard, and glow so bewitchingly in the touches of the describer, derive all their charms from the dimness and distance at which they are placed; and when one actually gets a sight of them, one is just as much disappointed as upon visiting the bonnie Jean of Burns, or holding converse with the six-feet-spouse of him who imposed his own songs upon the Relic-gatherer, as remains of an elder poesy, and made Roscoe in perfect agony until he should see this same substantial dame, in whom he was taught to believe that he should behold a paragon of beauty, and listen to an "Improvisatrice" more tuneful and more true than she who blanched the apple-flower, dyed the pear, and made Somerset House shiver to the echo of her lullaby, till Pickersgill nodded over the easel and dipped his matriculated pencil in the wrong tint.

In plain prose,- and if possible, without any prosing, the idea of the perfection and excellence of woman invariably carries along with it the ideas of softness, repose, and voluptuousness—mingled, it may be, with a certain trace of enchanting, cunning, and amiable artifice; and therefore the "Ladies of the Lakes" can never, by any design, or even by any chance, come into competition with the belles of the boudoirs. There is really

nothing in all the woods and wilds throughout the three kingdoms—ay, throughout the world, that can come up to the soft and sweet blandishments which just bend the grass in Kensington Gardens, and then glide away. No foot which "drudges to hoarse pipe and broken tabor," on the village green or in the village barn, can have the lightness and the fairy twinkle of those which twitter away the hearts of soldiers and senators at Almack's; and I verily doubt whether any provincial muster would stand a comparison with that of the nymphs who quadrille and waltz at the Mansion House,—even admitting that, holy days excepted, no small quota of their fair number follow the laudable and loud vocations of vending Epping sausages, and crying green hastings.

As the studies and habits of the Babylonian men are much more confined to a single subject than those of the men of places where society is smaller and more permanent, it is but natural to suppose that there should be a similar restriction on the propensities, or at least the pursuits, of the Babylonian women; and it must be admitted, that no where, throughout England at least, is the desire of woman to be provided for and to enjoy herself, more strong, or more undisturbed in its operation, than it is in the great Babylon.

Various circumstances, no doubt, contribute to stamp upon them this character; and though it may not correspond with an ignorant stranger's notions of the disinterestedness which he imputes to females, it may not be the less rational or the less proper upon that account. The fact is, that every person, whether male or female, born and educated in, or long habituated to such a place—a place where every thing that exists, exists by human ingenuity, must naturally take the same bias toward self and selfish enjoyment. The expense, too, of supporting a female in any decent appearance, makes it necessary for every one, either to have in herself the means of her own support, or to secure that connexion which shall enable her to derive it from others.

There is one virtue, or vice, or whatever else it may be called, from which the Babylonian females are entirely free; and that is, regular and systematic gossiping. I do not by any means intend to say that a Babylonian fair is destitute of that predominant bump of the female cranium, curiosity—an inordinate desire so to make the past and the future shake hands, as that they shall reveal all manner of secret histories in the fulness of their congratulations; but to take in the whole, or even a repeatable part of the materials which London

affords for this purpose, would defy even the reputed volubility of the female tongue, where its accents are not so slow and soft, and the other matters which occupy it not so numerous as they are in a crowded metropolis.

There is another quality, or practice, vibrating between a virtue and a vice, from which the Babylonian fair are also remarkably free; and that is blue-stockingism. It is true that there are, within the sound of the bell of St. Paul's, ladies as profoundly versed in the small vanities of philosophy, and who can endite verses at as small expense to the English of the King, or to the understanding of his subjects, as they who shiver over the embers of the vestal fire at the seat of some ice generating university of the North; but as every thing in London is a vendable commodity, valuable only on account of the return which it brings, the science and the song of the wise and the witty woman by the Thames, plump quietly into the river, unless some civil critic, for favours known or not known, proclaim them to the world, as matters worthy of being purchased.

To compensate for the want of those two grand sources of mental enjoyment, Babylon spreads out for her daughters an ample display of more substantial, if less sublime and ethereal pleasure. If women be withdrawn from their criticism and phi-

losophical display, (unless in the way of business as aforesaid,)—from the circle of their pursuits, the Graces are sent to console them for the first, and Cupid helps them to bear the miseries of the second: they are very prone to enter into wedlock; and they hesitate not to confess, or at least to show, that all their education, all their habits, all their occupations, and all their amusements, have that for their grand and invariable object. If they belong to the humbler classes of society, they readily bear a part in the labours of the profession, and second their husbands in turning the chances of business to the best account. So perfectly, indeed, in the under ranks, are the sexes identified in their employments and in their amusements, that, but for the difference of their dress, it would hardly be possible to distinguish the one from the other. When the rank is a little higher, there is just as complete a separation; and it very frequently happens that the lady of a superior Babylonian tradesman, or inferior Babylonian merchant, who lives "within four miles of the bridges," enjoys very little of her husband's society, and cares not much for him, so that she can keep up her own establishment, and enjoy her pleasures, uninterrupted and uncontrolled. Woman's a paradox in every place; and no where is she more a paradox than in Babylon the Great.

CHAPTER VII.

PARLIAMENT.

The Senators of Rome are this good belly,
——————————: for examine
Their counsels and their cares; digest things rightly.
Touching the weal o' the common; you shall find
No public benefit, which you receive,
But it proceeds or comes from them to you,
And no way from yourselves.—What do you think?
You, the great toe of this assembly?

SHAKSPEARE.

A DEVOTEE, journeying toward the dwelling of the successor of St. Peter, to salute the toe of that saintly portion of canonical flesh, feels not a fonder pulse, when beholding the gilded cross of the Eternal City rising over the dreary desolation which the *Malaria* is spreading over the Campagna, and a pious Moslem in the Desert lifts not his eye with more anxious devotion when the crescent upon Mecca's minaret first glimmers to his view, than a British subject does when he first beholds that uncouth mass of architectural abortions in which the members of the two Houses of Parliament are huddled up.

If he be a stranger, trusting to the guidance of his own judgment, and scorning the lore of the "Picture of London," his first impression is, that the display of lordly wisdom can be made in none other place than the Abbey; and that the Commons must perform their doings, in reading, writing, and arithmetic, in none other place than that great barn, the door-way of which so invitingly tempts his entrance from Palace Yard. He hurries into the Hall in quest of Speakers' chairs, and Treasury and Opposition benches; but he finds nothing, save an empty apartment with two or three trap-doors, at which attorneys are watching to pounce upon the lovers of the law, and within which counsellors are busied in crooking the rods of precedents, and statutes, and evidence, into little hoops which may suit that grand object of all special pleading—a full and forward harvest of fees.

Disappointed in this first attempt, he goes to the other pile: and gazing upon the north door, he reads these extraordinary and ominous words: "The entrance into the tombs is in Poets' Corner,"—a piece of information which he cannot comprehend; but which, rightly translated, implies, that "the monuments of some great men, and some men not great, may be seen round the corner upon paying a fee to the Dean and Chapter of St. Peter's,"

—that those memorials of British worth, or British worthlessness, to which he, among many others, may have contributed, may not be viewed by him until, after the true Catholic fashion, he has told out Peter's-pence.

Disappointed by the first of these searches, and disgusted with the second, the stranger proceeds to reconnoitre the whole of the tasteless incrustation of stone, and bricks, and stucco, by which the objects of his desire are concealed from the gaze of the wondering people. The royal porch near Abingdon Street puzzles his eyes a good deal, and his understanding a good deal more; and he runs some chance of mistaking it for the canopy which is borne by the Barons of the Cinque Ports, at coronation shows and other royal processions. Although he may have travelled over the whole world, and seen every kind and style of building, from the Temple of Minerva Parthenon, to the wigwam of a repudiated Cherokee, he cannot possibly have met with any thing bearing the least resemblance to this sooterkin of architectural dulness; and while he is wondering with what intention the blockhead who invented it, thrust it into the middle of the street, he is utterly at a loss even to guess at the purpose for which it can be intended. Proceeding northward, the vileness of the architecture, and the patched and perishable aspect of

the materials, equally astonish and disappoint him; nor is the matter much mended when he comes to the Grecian part of the structure,—for though that be more massy and substantial, it sins against every canon of congruity. Turning the angle by the butter-churn tower, and the dead wall, which the man of stone has, in consequence of the wrath of the wisdom of Parliament, "*done* out of the original Greek into the vulgar English, and made plain to the meanest capacity," he shrugs up his shoulders, gets him gone, and laments that so precious a kernel as the Lords and Commons of Parliament should be concealed in so pie-bald and pitiful a shell.

But the British Parliament is not a thing which either needs, or can receive, any additional interest or grandeur from the tool of the artist, or even from the taste and talents of the architect—when it shall please heaven to suffer the union of those epithets and that name in any of the master-builders of Babel. Its wisdom is not the wisdom of forms, and its greatness rests upon another sort of base than could be hewn in stone or jointed with mortar. It is the operating element—the first power, as it were, which puts in motion all the machinery of the civilized nations, and which directs, and without intending it creates, those energies which are every day carrying the science, the arts,

the spirit, and the feelings of England, over those lands, in which those fires of moral strength and political independence, which have burnt here so brightly for ages, are but beginning to be kindled. Besides the real wisdom which it displays, and the actual and visible power which it exercises, there is an undefined and mysterious something about the Parliament of Britain, which touches a chord in the heart of man—whether he be an Englishman or not—that lies motionless and unknown at the thought of every other assembly; and which makes its fame sound the louder and shine the brighter, the longer the vista, whether of miles or of years, through which it is seen. None but an Englishman can feel the full vibration of this mysterious chord; and an Englishman can no more account for it, than he can account for that impulse which makes him without hesitating a single instant draw the sword in defence of that Constitution, and that King, against which, up to the very instant that the trumpet sounded the charge, he kept grumbling and growling.

John will, as before hinted at, quarrel with all the details of his Parliament—with the way in which the whole, or almost the whole, of its members are appointed—with the whole, or almost the whole, of the speeches they make, and with the whole, without any exception, of the enactments which they send forth;

but still this Parliament forms so essential a part of his business, his enjoyment, his very life, that if it were finally dissolved, or even materially altered, John would be changed too, and that not at all for the better. Every day you may hear John complaining that the favour of the Crown puts coronets upon the brows of ninnies, and that the closeness or corruption of the representative system fills the benches of the Commons' House with men having small heads and large consciences; and when a man measures peers and members against himself—or, more strictly speaking, against his own idea and estimate of himself, it is very natural, and probably very necessary, that they, whatever may be their real talents and virtues, should suffer a little by the comparison. Men of all countries have a very comfortable and charitable notion of their own intellectual and moral furnishings. Richard Martin, Esq. would not, I dare say, change his bowels for beasts, for the heart of Howard the philanthropist, even though that heart were as much alive and quick as they; Mr. Solicitor-General Wetherall would, very probably, fall into Lord Eldon's slough of doubting, if he were requested to exchange faculties of discernment with that model of shrewdness and penetration; Joseph Hume would not truck his powers of calculation for those of Mr. Babbage; Mr. Horace Twiss would hardly barter his tools of oratory for

those of the Foreign Secretary; and I should take two days to consider before I exchanged the old pen with which I am now writing, for the first feather in the wing of that tuneful bird which does not sing for joy upon either of the birth-days of our most gracious Sovereign.

John Bull certainly does not boast so much of this partiality for himself, neither does he show it so well by labouring to conceal it, as the inhabitants of some other countries do; but it by no means follows from this that John has less of it than they. The fact is, that he has really more; and his having so, in as much as he is neither impertinent nor hypocritical about it, is the foundation of the very best points of his character. If, like the learned Frenchman, he stood so much in awe in his own presence, as to lift his hat and make his leg every time he mentioned his own name, folks would be very apt to laugh at him; and if, like his neighbour in the North, he pulled the mantle of concealment so closely over his head as to expose his hinder parts, folks might feel suspicion or cry shame; but as John merely enjoys his good opinion of himself, it becomes a matter with which strangers have no right to interfere, and as all the Johns have it, no one of them can find fault with the rest on account of it. The possession of this single quality, in so large and uniform a degree, is the cause of John's

grumbling with Parliament, and with every thing else; and there is not the least doubt, that if the members of that assembly were to adopt a measure for which John petitions in one week, he would come back the next and petition that it might be set aside and the former practice resorted to.

I do not hence mean to argue, either that the system by which the two Houses of Parliament are filled is the purest and most perfect that could be, or that the persons who fill those Houses are the very wisest and most virtuous that it is possible to imagine, or even might be possible to select; all that I contend for is, that the source of John's grumbling lies more in himself than in that against which he grumbles, and that though any number of alterations were made, his grumbling would not be much diminished. It were, indeed, pity that it should; for it is this perpetual watchfulness—this frank and manly expressing of the opinions, not of parties or factions, but of individual men, each for himself, that secures for England the foremost place in intelligence, in freedom, and in prosperity. The clashing of so many doctrines, the confusion of so many views, and the collision of so many plans and principles, give to the man who lifts his head from the dull couch of slavery, a notion that the English are a turbulent and a quarrelsome people, and that they are directed by

fools, governed by tyrants, and made the dupes of all manner of impositions and absurdities. But the fact is not so; if ever a nation take up one song, and continue month after month, and year after year, to sing it in unison, it requires no power of divination to discover that that song can be none other than the dirge of independence—that the individual men have ceased to think, to speak, and to act for themselves, and are mere menials at the beck of a task-master,—inthralled, not only beyond the power of their hands to deliver them, but beyond that of their heads to know how very abject, and how utterly hopeless, is their condition.

It is this collision of opinions, this continual war of thoughts and of words, which has kept England at peace and in prosperity within herself, while the soil of almost every other country has been dyed in the gore of its inhabitants; it is this collision which strikes those sparks of enterprise and of industry, which are hailed as the beacon-fires of improvement wherever they fall; and it is this collision which acts as a refining fire, and purifies from the rust of time and the dross of corruption, not only the British Parliament, but every institution of the British people.

Pope was by no means the wisest of political philosophers; but still there is a good deal of truth in his assertion, that the goodness of Governments

depends very much upon the mode in which they are administered. This is true, even of those which have no great portion of liberty; and there have been such differences between the sway of one Grand Seignior and another, as to give the force of demonstration to the proposition. That, however, is a demonstration which does not apply to England; because, whatever may be the imperfections of the British Constitution, the men by whom that Constitution is administered are not only nurtured in the common feelings of the people before they begin to climb the steps of office, but schooled by them at every inch of their progress.

It is all very well for theorists to talk of perfect constitutions,—constitutions so framed and modelled in all their parts, as that not even fools or knaves could do wrong in the application of them; but it would be just as wise to recommend razors with which a maniac could not possibly wound himself,—which would, of course, be razors wherewith a sane man could not shave. Constitutions less open to theoretical objections than that of England have been adopted in other countries—in countries which have reverted to close and humiliating despotism, without any thing that could be called a struggle; and the case of Ireland is worth all the pamphlets that ever were written, as demonstrative of the practical benefit that would result from putting

the elective franchise into the hands of those who want those most essential of all requisites, well-informed minds and personal independence. That the representation should be as wide as possible, and that the franchise should extend with the extension of intelligence and independence, and vary with their variations, cannot be denied; as little can it be denied that, where the people have been making such strides in improvement as they of England have made during the last half century, it is difficult for the Government to keep pace with them; but still, it is far safer that the franchise should be a little narrow, and the Government a little behind the people, than that a power should be introduced which sophistry could wheedle or impudence brow-beat, or than that changes should be made so hastily, as to be found wrong, and have to be reversed.

There is one excuse for the English Government which has considerable weight, and yet which has never, so far as I know, been admitted even by the most candid of its opponents; and that is, the injury which it must receive from the contact into which it comes with Governments of another description. Those who complain most loudly of corruption at home, must admit that, with all its alleged corruptions, the Government of England differs, not in degree merely, but absolutely in kind,

from the Governments of Continental Europe; and, with a very candid person, the wonder would rather be that the Government of England came out of all its linked and ramified connexions with so few hurts and stains from the Continental Governments, than that it did not, all the time during which it was so fettered, exactly keep pace with the English people. The people themselves suffered nothing in their spirit from this connexion; but really it was not possible but that the Government should suffer a little: and as Government, being a result, and not an original energy, contains not within itself the means of its own purification, it took some little pause, some little time, and some little schooling by public opinion—ay, and a considerable infusion of new men and new principles, before it became again wholly English. Now, however, candid men of all parties must allow that though there be much, very much, to be done in the details, the spirit and the principles are good; and it would require something more than the *dictum* of a theorist to persuade one that matters would have been better, even if the infallible *panaceas* of annual parliaments and universal suffrage had been in operation since these doctrines were first preached.

People may talk of the British Constitution, as it exists in forms, in statutes, in observances, and in the routine of offices; but the real Constitution,—

the *suprema lex*—the *salus populi*, is in the people themselves; and while they have the same intelligence, and the same spirit to give it utterance and effect, that government is not in England, or in any other country, which can destroy or even seriously impair their liberties.

In spite, therefore, of all the imperfections which really belong to the English Government, and to those Houses of Parliament which form the connecting link between the executive and the people, and of all the ideal imperfections which over-zealous or under-informed persons will impute to them, the British Parliament is the most stupendous intellectual engine that ever was put in motion; and there is no wonder though Englishmen be proud of it; for, go where they will, they can find nothing amounting even to its shadow. It contains men of such varied habits, such multifarious acquirements, and so different views; the subjects which come before it are so numerous, so vast, and so interwoven with each other,—that the great puzzle is how it gets on at all. In the domestic business which it has to regulate,—the Bills that are introduced for local purposes and local improvements, there are so many interests to be balanced, so many little advantages sought by parties to be guarded against, that even this part of its duty is more nice and laborious than the whole business of

most Governments. When, in addition to this, the number and variety of the foreign dependencies of England, and the way in which their interests run, or are supposed to run, counter to each other, are taken into the account, then the difficulty is vastly increased,—so much, indeed, that one would imagine that there would be no time left for attending to the connexions and intercourse of the British Government with the Government of almost every State upon the surface of the globe. But the fact is, that all those matters are managed, and managed in a very systematic and business-like way; and in addition to this, the real and efficient work of the assembly, there is more eloquence displayed, and more wit sported, in the two Houses of Parliament, than in all the other speaking Chambers in the world; and the orations which are made there, even upon casual subjects, and by men who, as we are told, get there because the system is corrupt, are superior in form, and incalculably superior in substance, to any other orations of modern or of ancient times. I am ready to admit, that in both Houses there is a great deal of drivelling, a great deal of dulness, and a very reasonable portion of downright nonsense, upon all sides and from all parties. I am ready to admit this, for I often witnessed it; but still there never is, by any chance, a debate of any considerable

length or importance, at which a Briton has not cause to be delighted, or a foreigner to express astonishment; and it is not by any means impossible, or I should think improbable, that the very Peter Moores and Bragge Bathursts, who command but a few, and a very few, of the larger ears in the British House of Commons, might make most eloquent Ciceros in the Chamber of Deputies to the most Christian King, or haply stars of the first magnitude in the constellation upon the banks of the Potowmac.

How far, or how fairly, the British Parliament may represent the British people, it is, however, no business of mine to inquire; my function in the mean time being that of a fair and impartial representation of the Parliament itself,—a function in the discharge of which I think I am as free from party feelings as any member of either House. Still no one can help observing, that the power of that public inquest, before which every speaker of either House is cited, is so prompt and vigorous in its action, that, in ordinary times, it would demand more than an ordinary share of hardihood to make a member persist in a line of conduct which was not agreeable, if not to the numerical majority out of doors, at least to a very large and respectable number. So long as every word that is said in those Houses continues to be faithfully reported,

and diligently read, and canvassed and commented upon by every intelligent man in the country, as soon after it is spoken as the power of steam and the swiftness of horses can disperse it, the country will continue to possess and to exercise, over both the Hereditary and the Septennial House, a check far more constant, efficient, and salutary, than if the Peers were nominated at a *Folk-mote*, and the Commons were elected by the "sweet voices" of the whole *posse comitatus* in their respective districts.

In theory, there is nothing that sounds better, has a more imposing air about it, or is fitter "to ring the pitcher, when the wine is low," than the wisdom of great and promiscuous masses of people; but when one comes to remove this external gloss, and examine both that which is done (as if) by crowds, and those who do it, then the aspect of the matter is very different indeed,—inasmuch as this boasted source of purity and *general* wisdom, is very frequently the most corrupt, the most confined, and the least wise thing imaginable. I shall have occasion to revert to this afterwards, when I pay my tribute of attention to those, who say the sayings and do the doings, for which huzzas are given and caps tossed up in Palace-yard, in Covent Garden market, and in the great room of the Mermaid at Hackney; and therefore I shall, in the mean

time, leave the reader to exercise his own ingenuity in finding out a licensed hawker of public opinion, whether fixed or peripatetic, whom he would reckon a safe and trustworthy guide in private matters; and if he can find such a one, then he will doubtless convert me from my scepticism upon the subject.

It has been said, and said with a great deal both of the semblance and the reality of truth, that a person returned to Parliament by Old Sarum, or by the Cornish boroughs, cannot well protect the interests of Manchester or Leeds; but I would be glad to know how the one or two persons who lead the mob, in those places, or in any place, would or could protect any one interest—general interest, in the country. If we examine the conduct of the present representatives in Parliament, (and I am no admirer or advocate for the system by which many of them are chosen,) we shall find that those interests which the inhabitants of any place or district are best qualified for understanding, are those which are most carefully attended to by the respective member. Nor is it at all uncommon for those members, whose means of obtaining their seats, and whose conduct when in them, are the least liberal and popular upon general questions, are most attentive to the local interests of their constituents,

and the most anxious to advance the substantial good and improvement of the country.

However it may suit the purposes of those who court indiscriminate popularity, it is not a very wholesome doctrine to preach, that the people generally would be very much the better for any great alteration in the mode by which the Houses of Lords and Commons are filled. If the people had the nomination of those persons once a year, or at the end of any period, there are possibilities that the result might be injurious, not merely to the persons elected, but to the people themselves. There might be injury to the persons elected, unless it can be shown that those talents which enable a man the most easily to influence and please a mob, are the best schooling in the science of politics. Now, this is rendered extremely doubtful by an attention to the general character of mob orators already hinted at; and more so, when one hears a popular orator of the present Parliament deliver his sentiments from the hustings, and again in the House. Sir Francis Burdett, for instance, who is a man whom every Englishman, let his party be what it will, must admire under any circumstances, is a very different personage when he trims the jacket of Henry Hunt in Covent Garden market, and when he turns the edge of an opponent's

arguments in the House of Commons. Hear him in the first situation, and though you cannot even there hear him without being somewhat pleased, there is a freedom in his language, which, carried even the least degree farther, would run into vulgarity,—there is a homeliness in his figures, and a broadness in his illustrations, which give you by no means an exalted idea of his refinement,—there is a violence of assertion in his positions, which forces you to think that he is not addressing himself to the understandings of those who hear him,—and there is a looseness and want of concatenation in his arguments—a reiteration of truisms, indefinite generalities, and absolutely of slang terms, which would give you the impression that he is a man of surface and of sound, rather than of any gentleman-like or statesman-like qualifications. But hear him in the House of Commons, and he is so very different, so vastly superior, in every power and in every grace, that you imagine you are listening to another person altogether. His language, which on the hustings was broad and coarse, is in the House chaste and classical,—his figures, which on the hustings were homely and broad, are in the House chosen with exquisite taste, and managed with admirable skill,—instead of wide and unsupported assertion, the positions which he takes are taken with a force of reason, and defended with a

clearness and closeness of illustration, which render them just as impregnable there, as in the other place they appear defenceless,—and instead of that disjointed and careless manner which on the hustings perplexes you, in the House you hear an oration which, though it evidently be not the result of laborious or continued study, is more harmonious in its parts, more alive to its object, and more powerful and triumphant in its general bearing, than the purchased speech of any special pleader. In both places you can see that the principles, the feelings, the heart, the manliness, and the stubborn John Bullism (so to express it), of the elegant, eloquent, and patriotic Baronet, are the same,—you can see in either place, that there is in him none of the leaven of corruption—not a single point which he hedges to conceal—not one feeling of his own mind to which he is fearful to give expression—not one desire to which he will sacrifice a single atom of what he believes to be the truth—and not one man nor one argument opposed to him, which he fears to meet or is afraid of conquering. In both situations he appears a man, and an Englishman: but on the hustings he appears as an Englishman, with many of the prejudices of those who feel, but do not think; while in the House, his thoughts and his feelings are in such admirable keeping, that he is the very model of independent men and capti-

vating speakers,—and the rush of all parties into the House when he rises, the deep silence during the statement of his arguments, and the triumphant and involuntary cheers which burst out when he makes his appeals to the principles of the English Constitution, and the feelings of the English heart, prove that he commands this character even from those who are, politically speaking, the most violently opposed to him.

Now, if the Sir Francis Burdett of the House be so very superior a personage, in all that can render a Statesman efficient and valuable, to the Sir Francis Burdett of the hustings, then it must follow, that, notwithstanding all its imperfections and its errors, there is something in the British Parliament which tends to elevate and to ennoble the human character; but which might be destroyed, and certainly would be weakened, if each member of that House were to have his original education and his annual exercise upon the hustings.

But if the representatives of the British people were wholly chosen by that people in public assemblies, for very short periods of time, then the public could not exercise over them that watchful jealousy —that power superior to all Parliaments and to all kings, which is one of the most valuable attributes of the present system. It would not be a wholesome state of the laws, if the judges and the

jury were to be the familiar associates of all persons put upon their trial; and as little would it be a wholesome state of the British Government, if there were any strong bias on the part of the people in favour of their representatives. Public opinion (not in any meeting that can be assembled, for public opinion is not the opinion of public meetings, or, at any rate, it is never expressed there,) is the grand bulwark of English liberty; and so long as it is kept in vigorous exercise by the general diffusion of intelligence, the people have an advantage, which it would be dangerous to exchange for any theoretical reform or change of the Constitution that could be named; and an opiate which would make John Bull slumber at his post, would be dearly purchased by the best constructed piece of mechanism that could be set up and called a Constitution.

As they at present exist, there may be, indeed must be, faults in all the three branches of the British Government; but while the British people retain their energy and their intelligence, there is a far more certain corrective of those faults than it would be possible to write upon scrolls of parchment, and seal with official signets. Deterioration is the tendency of every human institution; and no form of Government ever did or ever will become purer by its own effects. Instead, therefore, of seeking after a perfect system, which, were it

even possible to obtain, would not remain perfect for a day, the safe plan, and the plan which gives England its political advantages, is, that, if practical wrong be done, the people have a voice which can make the proudest Peer tremble, and the securest Minister totter in his seat.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE HOUSE OF LORDS *a*.

"A Lord's acquaintance!—Let him file his bill."

POPE.

THERE is nothing which more clearly indicates the advance that has been made by the people of England, than the change that the lapse of centuries has produced upon those titled personages who compose the Upper House of Parliament. The aristocratic principle is all that is left of the spirit of those haughty Barons, who were once the tyrants of their vassals and the dictators to their King; and even this principle is now changed in its operation,—it is acted upon by that part of the Aristocracy which is connected with the administration, having a leaning toward and a dependence upon monarchy; and that part which is in opposition, having a leaning toward and a dependence upon the people. It is this division of the Aristocracy which produces confusion among the political parties of England, and makes it

always difficult for a foreigner, and sometimes difficult for a native, to unravel the perplexity and understand the nature of those parties. What renders this more difficult, especially for foreigners, is, that there is no such division among the Aristocracy of any other country; because in no other country have the nobles who are not in office and confidence at Court such a power on which to lean, as that of the people of England. It may be galling to the pride of the English opposition nobles, thus to find the people the main tower of their political strength; but that does not alter the fact from being so, or becoming more so every day;—although the nobles be sometimes too blind, or too haughty, to use it as they should in policy, or make a return for it as they ought in gratitude.

Whoever attends to the members that vote upon the opposite sides of any great political question in the House of Lords, cannot fail to be struck that the numerical array for and against the Minister, in that House, are pretty nearly in the same ratio to each other as in the House of Commons; and yet, considering that instead of being chosen by any popular influence, the Lords, both spiritual and temporal, hold their offices immediately from the Crown, and hold them for life if spiritual, and with succession to heirs if temporal, those who regard the mere form of appointment and dura-

tion for which the appointment is to last, as the sole foundations of liberal principle and independent conduct in the persons appointed, would naturally conclude—at least in consistency with their doctrines they would conclude, that the whole of an assembly thus appointed, would be indifferent, and in opposition to that people, who have no voice whatever in their nomination. But if one argues in the safe manner—from the fact to the cause of it, one finds that as the hereditary Peers and Court-appointed Bishops do divide for and against opinions, in nearly the same numbers as the septennial Commoners, some of whom are elected by general poll, and most of them by some number of persons,—then one cannot help coming to the conclusion, that the mode and time of appointment have not half as much influence as the control which is exercised afterwards. Nor does it appear, that though the additions to the House of Lords, by creation, have been very considerable during the last thirty years, the state of parties in that House has taken a much more illiberal or Courtly bias, than it had in former times. The fact is, that before a Commoner can procure an elevation to the peerage, he must either be a man so conspicuous for talents or public services, as to have a character, his own respect for which must prevent him from doing any thing very degrading; or he

must have been so long and so devotedly a Court favourite, as to have detached an old Peer from that party, and thrown him upon the opposite one.

While the House of Commons have a good deal of the bustle, the activity, and the brawling of barristers in their composition and manner, the Lords possess much of the solemnity of Judges; and whether it be from the presence of the Church dignitaries, the greater softness of the woolsacks, the greater delicacy of lordly polish, the presence of the throne, or the occasional presence of the Sovereign *in propriâ personâ*, it may, perhaps, be difficult to say, but there is a slowness and quietude—an orderly softness about the Upper House, which has a good deal of the appearance, and probably also a little of the real essence, of dullness.

Besides the power of making and repealing laws, which the Peers possess in common with the King and the Lower House, they constitute the supreme Judicature of the country,—take cognizance of treasons and other high crimes, try all who are impeached by the Commons, and deliver their sentences, not by oath or conscience, but laying their right hands upon their breasts, give forth their "guilty," or "not guilty,"—"upon their honour;"—"So are all, all honourable men."

Furthermore, they form the ultimate Court of appeal, as well in law as in equity—which latter

branch of their power has, in as far as the equity is concerned, a slight trace of absurdity in it,—inasmuch as, in the matter of English cases at least, it is merely an appeal from the Chancellor on the bench at Lincoln's Inn, to the Chancellor upon the woolsack in the old Court of Requests at Westminster.

One naturally feels an anxiety to be within this house, and in consequence of its being a Court of justice as well as a Court of law, one may, upon ordinary occasions, enter it without paying that tax by which every public exhibition—I mean every exhibition of that which is really the property of the public—is disgraced,—a disgrace which proclaims more loudly that Mammon is the idol of the Babylonian worship, than any other circumstance that could be named. Turning to the left, after you have gained the termination of those steps which lead from the South end of Westminster Hall to the lobbies and labyrinths of the Senate-house, you enter a small and dark door upon your right, and after two or three turnings more you enter the House of Lords,—an apartment which impresses you with any ideas save those of grandeur.

At the farther or upper end of the room stands the throne, with gilded columns of the Corinthian order, and drapery w[illegible]h, whatever may be its individual taste, by no means accords with the grey

sobriety of the ancient tapestry with which the walls are hung, and which shows the portraiture of the once formidable Armada, piled ship above ship in defiance of every principle of perspective, and the effigies of the great men of the days of Queen Bess, as dark and grim as heart can desire. To the right of the throne is a seat for the heir apparent, and to the left, another for the next in presumptive succession. Below the heir apparent, on the same side, sit the Lords Spiritual, who are allowed backs to their seats upon all occasions. Farther down are the seats of the Members of the Administration, and of those Peers who are understood to vote with them; and farther down still is a small matted space, where the sons of Peers, or, I believe, members of the other House, may stand or lie, as they feel inclined, and listen to the solemn voices of the beneficed and titled orators. On the other side are the benches for the opposition; and in the centre, there are tables for the clerks, and woolsacks for the Chancellor of England and the twelve Judges. Whether it be that the uprightness of justice is understood to preserve these at all times in a perpendicular position, I know not; but certain it is, that they can have no physical leaning while they are in the House, as there are no rests for the back or the elbows even of the Lord Chancellor, who, in this respect, is less comfortably ac-

commodated than the Speaker of the Lower House. The office of that personage is one of much influence and emolument; but truly it would require to be so, because, taking the number and the importance of his avocations into consideration, there is not in England, and perhaps not in the world, an officer who has more severe or constant labour.

Below the bar, where you take your station, unless you are favoured with a peep by the side of the curtain behind the throne, is the place where counsel plead and witnesses give evidence, and also where the reporters for the newspapers, whom the House considers as not being there, take note of the stream of eloquence as it runs and broadens. Here they or the other strangers have nothing whereupon they may sit—it being understood that the things said are either of so much importance as that people shall be glad to be allowed to stand and hear them, or so very soft and opiate, that the most natural position is that of sleep.

You enter just as the Chancellor has taken his seat upon the woolsack, and while there is no other person in the House, save a casual Bishop, who comes to render darkness visible upon that interminable subject of profound—or, as I should rather say, *bathotic* legislation—the marriage act; or to "set forth and show" as much of the wisdom of the Deans and Doctors of his Diocess, as can be

embodied in a petition; but, as your very pious or very profound man is always so far of the order of *Pecora*, as that he ruminates—chews the cud on that which is within him, the head of the Lord Spiritual is so deeply delved in between his lawn sleeves, and these repose with such firmness and quietude upon the back of the seats which are set apart for their Graces of Canterbury and York—upon the which haply the edge of his meditation may be turned, that he has more the appearance of a sinless and snowy thing, than of a partaker in those waywardnesses and vanities which the eating of the fatal apple has entailed upon the children of the earthly Adam.

The Chancellor is therefore,—except mere door-keepers, and messengers, and clerks, with a lingering and apparently lifeless reporter or two, stretched recumbent upon the floor—beings whom a stranger with his eye in quest of lordly looks, and his ear perked up for lordly eloquence, has no disposition and indeed no power to recognize,—the Chancellor is the only person you behold, sitting with the imperturbable serenity and unbroken cheerfulness of a Bramin at his devotions, amid the richness of some Indian solitude. You cannot help feeling pleased that you are enabled thus to contemplate this man,—many would compliment him by saying this *nobleman*—this foremost of England's

Peers, in importance of office, and (discounting prejudices) I may also, with perfect safety, add, in clearness and in grasp of intellect—many would compliment Lord Eldon thus; but, it is more due to his being the architect of his own fortunes, without money to pay or friends to plead for his advancement—to his unbounded knowledge of justice and of equity between man and man—to his unwearied attention to his professional and parliamentary duties—to his undeviating straight-forwardness in his political course, even in all its errors and all its antiquated darkness, which will not bend themselves to the line, or come out to the light of the spirit and practice, of an ever-changing world, to pay the tribute to *man*. You are pleased, and you have great reason to be pleased, that you are enabled to contemplate Lord Eldon, without any thing to distract your observation or disturb your reflections; and when you look upon him, you cannot but feel that you are looking at a personage of no every-day occurrence. The lines of his face, deeply as they are marked, have none of those twistings and angularities which say that the spirit within, whatever may be its strength or its sparkling, is apt to be blown about by the winds of adverse passions. There is a shrewdness—a perfect *approfondissement* in every point of his visage, which shows you that his mind can in an instant scan the

whole, and measure the parts, of the most extensive and most complicated subject that can come before him; there is a firmness and yet a softness—or rather, perhaps, I should say a self-confidence and repose, in the strong muscles about his lips, which at once tell you that he will never utter what he does not himself believe, and that he will never utter it in a way which shall not be agreeable. His eyes, though they have the stillness and the apparent depth of mountain lakes, when the wind dares not even whisper, and though they indicate that some profound mental operation is going on within,—some knotty point, darkened by all the sophistry of the bar, and damaged by the blundering of less clear-headed men of the bench, is in the act of being resolved, and brought back again to clearness and consistency—or some deeply laid and cunningly conducted fraud, by which generations unborn were all but spoiled of their heritage, is in the very article of being detected, exposed, put an end to,—though they tell you this, they have none of that dull filminess, that oblivious glimmer of hunting after thought, which deadens the eyes of minor men while in cogitation upon minor subjects: there plays a gentleness, a perfect good humour, a wit—happy and harmless as that of an infant, and a something else which no one can name, about them, which, if you have any speculation in you at all, force you to come to the conclusion that

the cheerfulness which Lord Eldon has uniformly possessed during the very long period of his labours, is a cheerfulness resulting from the consciousness of having done his duty,—a consciousness in which, if you be free from prejudice, you cannot bring yourself to believe that he is mistaken.

I am not praising the politician, for, if politics were any part of my present object, I think that even *I* could demonstrate that the whole tenour of Lord Eldon's has been wrong; and I think I could be able to show, that not a little of the error here has resulted from the contradictory nature of the duties which he is called upon to perform, and from the intense application with which he has given up his mind to the awarding of equity among "things as they are." If a Constitution or a code of laws were to be *made* for a country, Lord Eldon is, perhaps, the very last man that should be chosen to make them; because the foundation of all that he has thought and decided, has been in laws pre-existent; and so intently has he devoted himself to these, that he must have overlooked many parts of the mechanism of society,—parts which are the most essential to original legislation. As little could any man recommend Lord Eldon, as one who could help forward human nature, either in intellectual or in social improvement. Improvement of every kind, though not illegal, is *extra*-legal—there

is no recognition of it, and no provision for it, upon the Statute-book; and therefore it follows, by necessary consequence, that upon all points of speculation, whether political or commercial, Lord Eldon, or any man circumstanced and acting like Lord Eldon, should take the illiberal side. The law is no where a school of liberality—I mean, of course, liberality of views. It ties men down to a rule, and levels all the aspirations of ambition and genius to one uniform tenor of precedent or equity. That there are liberal, and even speculative men, belonging to the legal profession, cannot be denied; but they are liberal in spite of their profession, and not in consequence of it; and wherever such a lawyer exists, it will, upon examination, uniformly be found, that the books which he voluntarily reads, and the themes which come unbidden to his contemplation, are very different from rescripts, and decretals, and comments, and statutes, and cases. Brougham, for instance, is a lawyer, and he is at the same time one of the best informed, and the most liberal man, upon all subjects that bear upon the improvement or the happiness of man. But though Brougham be a very able and exceedingly eloquent lawyer, it does not require an inquisition into the fact, to know that the law cannot be the single or even the main subject about which the gigantic mind of Brougham is

interested. Upon examination, it would be found that Brougham has always some grand scheme—some intellectual hobby, for which his thoughts are ever and anon deserting the society of John Doe and Richard Roe, and to which they turn with a fondness, and cling with a pertinacity, unknown in his profession of a lawyer, well versed and successful in that as he is.

That Lord Eldon—that the humbly descended, and for a long time unsuccessful and neglected John Scott, should have risen to the very summit of trust-worthy and political office,—should have been for so long a period Lord Chancellor of England and Lord Keeper of the Great Seal and the King's conscience, is equally creditable to himself and to his country. I do not say that his conduct as Lord Chancellor and Lord Keeper of the Royal conscience has been equally honourable, or equally advantageous to either party; because I am not sure that those high offices are so compatible with each other, as that those talents, and that turn of mind and train of study, which qualify a man for being eminently valuable and successful in the one of them, may not prevent him from being so valuable and successful in the other. What theoretical connexion there may be between that profound judgment in matters of equity, which is essential to a good Lord Chancellor, and the keep-

ing of a Royal conscience, I do not pretend to know; neither can I, for the soul of me, find out upon what principle they have been united together; but of this I am certain, that the duties of the Lord Chancellor of England, as Lord Chancellor, are quite enough for any man, without troubling him with so nice and delicate a function as that of conscience-keeping,—a thing which, of all things in the world, is ever the most in danger of slipping through the fingers even of him to whom by birthright it belongs. Conscience is altogether an inexplicable, and even a contradictory matter: for, even in common language, the increase of it is accounted precisely the same as the diminution; and to have an over-large conscience, and no conscience at all, is, in ordinary parlance, one and the same thing.

Probably the incompatibility of these two parts of his office may account for the doubtful nature of Lord Eldon's judgment in politics, while in law it is so very profound and correct. Altogether, however, he is an uncommon man—uncommon, not in a party or an administration merely, but uncommon in a nation or an age—even in nations or ages. Even his enemies, and they have been neither few nor silent, must concede to him the possession of natural talents and capacities of the very highest order; nor can they deny to him the

largest stock of acquired knowledge—that is more especially, or rather perhaps exclusively, of acquired legal knowledge, of any man now living. As might be expected, his logic is close and clear, where his judgment is profound; and dwindles into sophistry, or drawls in assertion, where his judgment is clouded or imperfect. His ingenuity, indeed, is always such, that when he is combating even the clearest proposition, either of his avowed opponents, or of the more generally enlightened part of his colleagues in the Ministry, there is always a semblance of ratiocination in his speech,—a beginning and an end in his argument, however much it may be disjointed and broken in the middle.

From his voice, his language, or his style, Lord Eldon derives but little assistance. Born a Northumbrian, as I believe, the uncouth huskiness of the Northumbrian orthoëpy still cleaves to him; nor does it appear that he has attempted to change it—at any rate, he has not succeeded; and I should suppose, that Lord Eldon attends too much to the ideas which he is delivering, to have any leisure or any wish to set the syllables in which they are delivered to the music of sweet songs. His language is simple and natural, with an occasional looseness, which one would not expect in so acute a discriminator, and so clear-headed a Judge. The style of his

speaking,—and that may in part be derived from his interferences in reefing the large and lumbering sails of the Chancery barristers, is homely and colloquial; and though he not unfrequently sins in a joke, or spots the solemnity both of the bench and the woolsack with a remarkably good-natured and generally well-timed witticism or piece of humour, yet he is never guilty of blowing tropes and figures into those tornadoes of rhetorical rage, by which some orators confound alike their own arguments and the understandings of their hearers. When Lord Eldon speaks without sophistry, you are always sure to understand him, and convinced that he understands himself; and even when he takes to his sophisms, you can see perfectly well what he is after, and cannot help suspecting that he himself is perfectly aware that the end he has in view, the means by which he is approaching it, or both together, are not just exactly what they should be.

But the disadvantages (if they are disadvantages) under which Lord Eldon labours, in voice, in language, and in style, are made up, and perhaps more than made up, by his temperament, his expression, and his manner. His temperament is more uniformly cheerful, perhaps, than that of any other man upon record, who had the same important and laborious duties. As Chancellor, this

cheerful, bland, and soothing appearance never leaves him; and in politics, though he be a strong, and often a prejudiced and bigoted party man, he is never an angry or a peevish one. The perfect intelligence and acuteness, too, that stand confessed in his every feature and his every look, give great confidence to his friends, and much confusion, and not a little disarming, to his opponents; while his mild, and affable, and prepossessing manner is calculated to win the hearts even of those of whom he cannot command the understandings.

Such are a few traces of the character of Lord Eldon, as they might strike any one who came unprejudiced to see him, either on the Chancery bench (upon which, by the way, I may visit him another time) or as Speaker of the Upper House of Parliament; and the reflections with which I have ventured to intersperse them are those which occurred to myself when I saw him (and it was the first time I saw him) sitting solitary among the woolsacks.—The importance of the place, the great national events of which it had been the nursery, the grand displays of legislative and judicial power of which it had been the scene, its limited size, its lonely furnishings, and, above all, its being calm and almost deserted, made such an impression upon me, that they drew me into a reverie about woolsacks and Lord Chancellors, and bowing Lords and nod-

ding Bishops, that I did not, till I was forcibly pushed to one side, perceive that the House, both above and below the bar, had filled, and that room was making for a deputation of the Commons, who were to present some Bill or other for the furtherance of industry in the principality of Wales.

If I may be permitted to use the expression, this deputation was *headed* by the hospitable owner of Wynnstay, and acknowledged Lord of North Wales, Sir Watkins Williams Wynne, Baronet. The superiority of station which the members of the House of Peers assume to themselves over the members of the Lower House, is not more strongly marked in any thing than in their official communications,—which are, in fact, copied after the way in which a peer and a peasant are understood to perform their ordinary business. The Peer sends his servant to do the work, while he himself remains in unoccupied and lordly state. The Commoner, when Peers first came into fashion, had no menial, and therefore did the business himself. It is much the same in the intercourse with the two Houses: the Peers send a message, and the Commons go upon a deputation. The messenger in the former case is a footman, with his cudgel of office; and though the officer of the House of Commons shoulders his mace, and marshals him the way, upon leave of entrance granted by the Speaker, yet it is only the

servant who comes and makes his bows in the Lower House, and he turns his back upon the Speaker the moment that those are made. The Commons, on the other hand, upon permission being granted to appear at their Lordships' bar, come in with as many and as sapient noddings of the head, as a wooden mandarin performs in a tea-dealer's window; the Chancellor advances to meet them, dazzling them with the tinsel of his official bag, as Minerva did the Trojans with her Ægis; and when they have said their say, in as hasty and as humble words as possible, backwards they nod again after the same mandarin fashion, and keep their eyes upon the mysterious satchel, until the click of the folding doors tells that they have vanished.

The deputation to which I allude came in this manner; and certainly the majority of the Upper House received them with lordly *nonchalance*. The Chancellor himself was the only one that made even an inclination of the head, or returned a smile as the price of all their noddings. In the meanwhile, a Right Reverend Lord was making a speaking-trumpet of the Earl of Liverpool's ear; Lord Holland, with his legs crossed, and both his hands on the top of a hazle staff, appeared to be humming a tune; Lauderdale was casting in, below the benches, a glance which would have made one suppose he was afraid of rats; Earl Grey had his lips squeezed

together, and a tenseness and rigidity over all his muscles, as if something had been pinching him, and he scorning to tell it; sundry coroneted brows and mitred heads were nodding, but assuredly not in return for the nods of the Commons' deputation; and even the soft Kenyon hardly exchanged a look with his compatriot. While this deputation was returning, the House became more and more crowded, the powers of slumbering got themselves into their places of repose; and the whole Lords, Spiritual and Temporal, harnessed themselves for a debate,—the appearance of the House during which was in itself too interesting, and to me too novel, to come in at the end of this chapter.

CHAPTER IX.

THE HOUSE OF LORDS. 6.

"Now the storm begins to lour." GRAY.

WHATEVER influence the titles and the honours of the English nobility may have upon their talents and their morality, there can be no question that, both out of their House of Assembly and in it, they give a tone of order and dignity to their conduct. This may, in some measure, arise from the circumstance of most part of them being older men than the members of the House of Commons: the occasional presence of the Monarch, and the continual presence of the throne, may also have an effect; and very probably the presence of the Church dignitaries may not be wholly without influence. But whatever may be the causes—and it is not worth while to analyse or investigate them—it is certain that there is a suavity and a decorum in the conduct of this House, which belong not to any other assembly, whether of laymen or of churchmen, that I

ever witnessed. It is true, that their harangues are not just so brilliant as some of those in the Lower House; but it is equally true, that they are less discursive, stick more closely to the matter in debate, preserve a greater show of civility towards each other, do not cackle so much when they are pleased or triumphant, or make such attempts to browbeat when they are apprehensive; nor do they carry their animosities so often beyond the arena of their oratory, as they of the House of Commons. They have been taunted by men of more glib tongues and more flexible notions: they have been called the House of Incurables; but, to me at least, they appear to be incurable only in the same way with a man who is already in perfect health. Nor ought it to be forgotten, that, notwithstanding the Commons are the Constitutional watchmen in every thing that concerns the rights and interests of the people, the Lords have often detected flaws, and resisted encroachments upon rights which did not belong to themselves as a body, and which the Commons had wholly overlooked. At the present moment, notwithstanding the mass of business-talent which is in the Lower House, it is the Chairman of the Standing Committee of the Lords, who is the grand assay-master of all private Bills, and who certainly discovers, and as certainly strikes out those illegal but concealed clauses, which the framers of

such Bills often smuggle in, in order to forward their own interests. I had myself occasion to know of a case in which the public had to fight against as unprincipled a set of jobbers as ever disgraced office, in a situation so remote as to be without the control of the high and honourable servants of the Crown, and guardians of public right. Clause after clause, and sentence after sentence, of the draft of the Bill had, by those who had no party interest to serve, been foughten as hard, and won as fairly, as ever were the inches of a battle-field. When the Bill was brought into the House of Commons, it was known that there was one faulty little clause—one provision for a job—a job not better than a beggar's alms indeed, but still a job; and it was hoped that the wisdom of the House of Commons would wash out the little spot. But they did not. It passed that House without a single observation; and those agents and members who were aware of it, and hostile to it, were afraid to bring it into notice, lest they should thereby stir up an opposition which would be fatal to the whole measure. The moment, however, that it went to a Committee in the House of Lords, and the Earl of Shaftsbury laid his finger upon the faulty clause, he dashed it out as unparliamentary. This, of course, is but one instance out of many; and, trifling though it be, it shows the prejudice which exists, or

rather which occasionally exists, that the capacity and utility of this House do not rest upon the very surest of all foundations. It is true, that the coronet is often placed upon brows, where it can neither dignify nor be dignified; but it is not less true, that the Peers of Parliament are as thoroughly imbued with the principles and the love of liberty, and with the knowledge of every thing that can advance the interests of society, as any class of British subjects. Nor are they the less likely to exercise those feelings, and defend those rights, because they are somewhat more measured in their temper and their eloquence than the members of the other House.

The debate which followed the presenting of the Welch Bill, and sundry other minor matters of form and detail, was long, interesting, and animated; so that in the course of it I had occasion to see and to hear most of the leading speakers of the day. One of those speakers, and in point of ardent love of liberty and of man, of perfect and impassioned eloquence, of keen perception, of overpowering elegance, of commanding manliness, and of unrivalled empire over every passion of the human heart, has since then paid the final tribute to nature; and no equal or near follower to him, in any of his higher attributes, has yet been found. I need not say that I allude to the late Lord Erskine,—a man

in whom the sheer and almost unbidden power of genius planted itself with a firmness, and shot up with a strength and a sublimity, to which there is nothing counterpart in the recent annals of the world. Born not under the most auspicious circumstances, and nurtured not upon the world's most flowery side, a portion of the genuine spirit of man—an intense breathing of that afflatus which not all the Courts and all the Colleges in the world can inspire, came upon the Hon. Thomas Erskine, and enabled him, in the teeth of many an adverse circumstance, to make a stand for English liberty, and take a station among British patriots, of which the genuine instances are but too easily numbered.

When a general movement toward revolution on the part of nations, and a general disposition to meet that movement with haughtiness and harshness on the part of their rulers, threatened to lacerate the social compact in many of the European States—when the Government of this country, yet feeling the disgrace and defeat which it had sustained from its own colonists in the West, and dreading the dark clouds which were every where collecting in the most lowering and appalling shapes in the East, was disturbed from its usual wisdom (as one would suppose) and driven away from its usual paternal solicitude for the happiness, the prosperity, and (may I also add?) the liberty of its subjects,

and proceeding or preparing, or at least seeming to prepare, for modes of actions and lines of policy which, had they been adopted and proceeded in, might have embroiled it in the impending ruin, Thomas Erskine arose, and did perhaps more for the Government, and certainly more for the people of England, than any other man of almost any time. When they who looked only to the stability of the throne, or rather to the security of their own places under the throne, were preparing, in the anguish of begun despair, to do that which even they never would have dreamed of in the exercise of judicious courage—when even the orators, who profess to despise that which they had schooled themselves in oratory in the hope of obtaining, were wavering and irresolute, or, at any rate, wasting their time and dissipating their abilities in Utopian projects of general reform, which never were fitted and probably never intended, to come into practical operation—when the very corner-stone of England's Palladium was threatened to be moved from its place—when the most glorious leaf in the volume of her liberties seemed about to be given as dry stubble to the blasts of anarchy—when that Jury of his Peers, by which England's best law says that every man shall be tried, was in jeopardy of being made a piece of idle mummery—when there was some danger that justice would

fling clean away the scales of equity and the *curtana* of mercy, and grasp the crooked falchion of vengeance with both her hands—when, in short, England and England's weal were rocking to their very bases, and the governors and the governed were in the very act of being burst asunder, to meet again in the collision of national ruin,—it was then, then that Erskine, with no weapon save that of truth, and no auxiliary but that of transcendent and overpowering genius, sprang forward at the very point of extremity, and by preserving the integrity of the law, worked at once the salvation of the throne and of the people.

Such was the service which the late Lord Erskine at one time rendered to his country, and to human nature: but nothing connected with individual man is immortal. The good king of the former hour is forgotten, for the sake of the better king of the present,—because the one has the power of giving, while with the other all power is at an end; the wonder of yesterday is lost sight of in admiration of the wonder of to-day; and the patriot of a former year ceases to be named, lest he should detract from the merits of the patriot of the present. New men, like new shapes of furniture and new patterns of dress, are valuable because they are fashionable; while those to which mankind have been long accustomed are, though they be ever so

much more substantial or convenient, laid aside as useless, because they are old. Lord Erskine lived to the extreme limit of man's duration; and though he retained an uncommon degree of vivacity and vigour to the last, and never lost with the people one tittle of that admiration which he had so gloriously won, yet among political men he received not in his last years that consideration which he had commanded in the prime of his meritorious services. The fame of Lord Erskine is still safe enough, however; and though it were not, it is far better that Englishmen should not be sufficiently grateful to the man who saved their liberties, than that those liberties should have not been saved.

Of the existing members of the Upper House, those whom provincial people talk of most frequently, and look up to with most respect, as the leaders of the Ministerial and the Opposition party, are the Earl of Liverpool and Earl Grey; and those who live at a distance, and who have never had personal opportunities of studying those noblemen, run some chance of making an exchange in several of their qualities,—of picturing Liverpool, the steady Tory, as a man of haughty bearing and austere front; and Grey, the consistent Whig, as one who is all mildness and conciliation to the people: but the reality is just as much the reverse of this as can well be imagined. Liverpool is one

of the most candid, or at least mild and kindly men living; while Grey is haughty and stubborn to absolute moroseness. The one seems an universal philanthropist, whose house, whose hand, and whose heart,, are open to every body; the other looks a proud and haughty Baron, who would retire from the contamination of the people, shut himself up within his castle, and command the falcons and demi-falcons to play upon them from the battlements, if they would not get them gone from his baronial vicinity.

Lord Liverpool possesses a moderate and reasonable degree of original talents; and they have received a moderate share of cultivation, though that has been a cultivation in business details rather than in original or theoretical principles. His judgment is respectable, although it has by no means the acute and searching profundity of that of Lord Eldon; and though upon the whole he be a clear logician, he is apt to fall into many blunders upon many subjects; and this, evidently because many of the subjects with which he has to grapple, involve combinations which are too intricate for his disentanglement, and principles which are too large for his grasp. In his appearance there is something extremely prepossessing; and no man can be more specious in his manner, or more mild in his expressions: nor do these agreeable qualities appear

to be in the least assumed,—they are so easy and so habitual, that he must have received them from nature. His voice is loud and clear; and his language, though not of the most powerful or classical character, is notwithstanding good. Nor is there any great reason to quarrel with the structure of his speeches: they are rather loose, to be sure, and generally somewhat lengthy; but as both the looseness and the length have the appearance of being the result of a continual endeavour to make himself perfectly understood, they are never either tiresome or offensive. Lord Liverpool is an agreeable speaker, as well for the qualities that I have noticed, as for the air of perfect earnestness and good faith which are always playing about him. When he blunders, though there scarcely be any one in whom we regret the existence of a blunder so much, there is perhaps no man in whom we feel so little disposition to be offended. We like some men on account of the doctrines which they propound; and there are many instances in which Lord Liverpool claims our regard upon this account: but there are others in which one, who is independent and unprejudiced, can neither refrain from disliking the doctrine, nor from liking him by whom it is set forth. Notwithstanding the mildness of his manner, and the soft, persuasive, and diffusive flow of his words, Lord Liverpool is a

man of sanguine temperament; and though his feelings have not the mass or the hardness of those of men of more stern and vigorous character, perhaps there is not in the whole House one whose feelings are keener, or who is so delicately sensible to that which runs counter to his opinion of the principles of right and wrong.

Earl Grey is very much the reverse of all this: one cannot help assenting to most of the doctrines which he delivers, and admiring the mode in which they are delivered; but really it would require more coaxing than the pride of Earl Grey could be expected to submit to, to make one very much in love with the man. With a better knowledge, perhaps, of the popular rights of Englishmen, more perfect judgment in their defence, and a more commanding, dignified, and forcible declaration of them, than any other man in either of the Houses, the whole bearing of Earl Grey, whether truly or not, I take not upon me to determine, proclaims, and proclaims it in such a way as that no one can possibly mistake it, that he does not consider himself one of those people of whose rights he is, notwithstanding, so bold and so able a champion. Earl Grey is an elegant man in his person; and his usual dress is tight and trim, bordering upon priggism. When he sits still, there is a querulous and hectic air about him, which would

induce one to believe that he feels sore both in body and mind; and when he first rose to speak, I felt a kind of mixed sensation that never came across me upon first observing any other public man. During the first sentence or two, it seemed as if the subject had been too great for his bodily strength, and too little for his mental feelings—as though he had risen to perform an act of duty to which his strength was unequal, and to do a deed of condescension by which his notion of himself was to be humbled. This expression, however, by degrees, wore off; and he had not proceeded far, when his strength appeared more than commensurate to the task; and, if his mind had not descended to what seemed at first the level of the subject, he had soon contrived to elevate the subject to his own vantage ground. Never did I hear the parts of an argument chosen with better judgment, or put together with more fitness and force of logical concatenation. His voice, which had at first seemed the voice of a man ready to gasp or to faint through feebleness, caught a peculiar manliness of emphasis, which was in no way diminished by its slightly guttural tone. His language, though simple, and never strained after gaudy ornaments, seemed to me nevertheless to be a perfect model of elegance; while in his air and his gestures there was so much of genteel dignity, and polished lofti-

ness, that I could soon see a reason for his being looked up to as the leader of a party, (since I must mention parties,) in the composition of which pride does not form the smallest ingredient.

If Earl Grey seems the portraiture of the haughty Baron, who, with circumstances a little changed, might exist in any country, Lord Holland is the express image of John Bull himself, and could neither have been produced, nor could exist, out of England. Every thing about him is English. You would tell a secret to Liverpool with perfect confidence, and, touching your hat to Grey, as a highly respectable and respected personage, you would pass by on the other side; but the moment that you see Lord Holland, a very strong disposition comes across you to walk up to him, and shake him by the hand with as much cordiality as you would a twenty years' friend after a thirty years' absence. He is so perfectly plain, and even homely, though certainly without the least trace of vulgarity, in his dress, his person, and his manners—there sits such a demonstration of good feelings, good intentions, good heart, and good cheer, every where about him—and there are withal so many "wreathed smiles" about his mouth, and such a glee, and a desire to be happy and to make happy, in his eye, that, instead of meeting with him in the cold solemnity of the House of Lords, you

would far rather that he and you should retire and crack a bottle and a joke together, after the business of the House were over.

Notwithstanding, however, this plain and unpretending, this amiable exterior, you somehow or other cannot help keeping your eyes rivetted upon Lord Holland. There is a lightness and a play in the muscles of his countenance, which, clogged with no inconsiderable degree of obesity as they are, you cannot discover in those of any other of the congregated Peers; for the sparkle—or, perhaps, rather one should say, the ripple—upon the countenance of Lord King, has a hardness and a satirical angularity, which is wanting in the other; and the good humour of the Chancellor is somewhat too subdued and stilly for all, or even for ordinary tastes. There is a transparency and a gleaminess in Lord Holland's eye, too, which charms you—if not after the fashion in which creatures are said to be charmed by the eye of a basilisk, yet charms you, perchance, somewhat more than you would expect to be charmed by the eye of a Lord. While looking at his figure, you would imagine that he was sitting in a state of listless helplessness; but if any position shall be taken by those on the other side, which strikes him as peculiarly absurd or untenable, or if any thing is attempted to be defended, which appears to him unconstitutional

or unjust, there beams a glance from under his very marked and expressive eyebrow, which has more both of commentary and refutation in it, than many long and elaborate speeches. You continue to look at him; the whole of his expression gradually undergoes a change—either becomes animated in itself, or you become animated to the perception of it; so that even before he rises to speak, you have been worked into a sort of prophetic belief, that, in as far as the poetry, the music, and the feelings of eloquence are concerned, he is the most eloquent Peer around the woolsack.

As soon as the noble Lord rises to speak, you find, at least as far as the gifts of nature, and the internal machinery of an orator, are concerned, that your prophecy was a correct one. Even here, however, external appearances are decidedly against him, and prevent superficial observers from giving to his genius and his heart that credit which they unquestionably deserve. In his manner he is plain and kind; but there is a hesitation about him, which, joined to his apparently constitutional artlessness, makes you feel a species of sympathy for him, which, to whatever extent it may increase your affection, is by no means calculated to draw forth your admiration. His voice is soft and musical, his language invariably pure and classical; and his style, though light, sketchy, and varied, is al-

ways eloquent. In the substratum of his mind there is considerable power; and you cannot help thinking, that had he cultivated it with more assiduity, the result, both to himself and to his country, would have been extremely beneficial. Lord Holland is by no means a close logician; and though the individual parts of his oration be remarkably good in themselves, and exceedingly well managed, he seldom puts them together in such a way as to give to the mass the sum of the forces of all the constituent parts. Of all party men in the upper House who speak often, and speak with passion, Lord Holland is perhaps the man of the least asperity. Some go to work by an attempt to break down, by forcible and forward means, the arguments of their opponents, and a very few level their deadliest shafts in a personal way; but of personal hostility Lord Holland has very little, if indeed he have any, and of straight-out fighting in argument he has not a great deal. No doubt he can declaim, and declaim with great power or great pathos, as circumstances may require; but still, if declamation take the form of invective, the object of it is usually something more abstract and general, than a man or party of men. His *forte* in speaking is two-fold: he can, by a succession of brief and brilliant sallies, put those against whom he is arguing into much better humour with him than they are

with their own arguments, or even with themselves; and no man can make a better display in warmth and width of illustration. Lord Holland is, in short, apparently the best-humoured man, and certainly the best modeller of a single figure (of speech I mean), in the upper House of Parliament.

But notwithstanding all the warmth of his own heart, all the warmth which he inspires in the hearts of others, all the glowing pictures which he draws of departed liberty, and all the poems which he sings to the memory of his favourite—seasoned by snatches of the most pointed and penetrating satire against those by whom, in one country or another, she has been overthrown,—there is about Lord Holland, besides his hesitation, a subdued, irresolute, and half-desponding tone, which makes one doubt his belief, that any of the glowing scenes which his fine imagination can paint so well, shall ever be realized. In smooth times, and with the voice of the nation to back him, Lord Holland would be one of the most delightful leaders in the cause of general freedom and general prosperity, and no man could better point the indignation of an enlightened and manly Government against an open or an insidious foe: but the structure of Lord Holland's mind is all too delicate, and the chords of his heart are all too slender and too sweet-

ly tuned, to enable him to grapple with any immediate danger, or to be strong in times of peril, or against a party of obdurate hearts, overbearing pretensions, or overpowering strength.

No doubt, if the dispositions of all men were as they should be, Lord Holland would be one of the most efficient, as under any circumstances he must be one of the most pleasant, Parliamentary Peers; and at the present time, when the disposition of a majority, if not of the whole of the British Cabinet, is to do good, there can be no question that he is better qualified to stimulate their intentions, and accelerate their progress, than a more haughty and stubborn orator. When it is farther considered that the line of his Lordship's political course has been, all things considered, a straight one, and that the ardour into which he has been betrayed, has proceeded more from the warmth of the heart than from the ambition of the head, I should naturally suppose that there is not in the ranks of Opposition, in that House of which he forms one of the brightest ornaments, a single individual from whom the adverse party would take a hint with more frankness or more gratitude than from Lord Holland.

Lord Harrowby, though of the very opposite politics to Lord Holland, and though unlike him in several points of his character, yet, perhaps, comes nearer to him in a considerable number of them,

than any other member of the Peers. It is true, that he is wholly without that jolly expression of boon companionship, which makes one feel so heartily toward the other, and he wants entirely the classical language, and the light and playful eloquence of style. Nor is the matter of his speaking more similar than those points of the manner; for while the charm of Lord Holland consists in the generous glow of ever-varying illustrations, that of Lord Harrowby consists in the clearness of details. In talents they are, perhaps, pretty nearly upon an equality; and what the one possesses as an eloquent scholar and man of letters, is compensated in the other by an acquaintance with official machinery and movements. In consequence of this, though Lord Harrowby would not withstand Lord Holland for a single minute, as a fine and fervent orator, he would ultimately be more than a match for him as a man of business.

Lord Harrowby's judgment is very considerable, and his logic is connected and good; so that though he never can be an overpowering or commanding speaker, he is always intelligible, and often convincing. That mind, too, would be sadly prejudiced, which did not like the man: I speak not of the man as he acts in private life,—as he conducts himself to his family and his relations; because in that respect he, or any other man, is not the property

either of those major historians, who write in sounding periods that which they do not very well understand, or of those minor and desultory annotators, who, like me, understand tolerably well a good many things which the gentleness and forbearance of their own dispositions forbid them to write; I speak of the man, as he is the property of the public—as he stands up to deliver his sentiments and do his duty in the grand Council of England; and, putting prejudice and passion aside, I say, and I defy contradiction, that there are few persons there, with whom, as men, one has reason to be better pleased than with Lord Harrowby. His expression is not merely mild, it is absolutely benignant; and his manner is so imposing, his style so artless, and his language so simple, that in spite of the smallness and the feebleness of his voice, his influence is, and deserves to be, very considerable. Under no circumstances could Lord Harrowby be a showy character; but it is as difficult to imagine any circumstances under which he would not be an useful and an agreeable one.

No Peer is more different from both of these than the Earl of Lauderdale, whose character is about as sullen as that of Lord Holland is soft, and whose expression is about as "irony" (there is no managing his Lordship's expression without coining a word) as that of Lord Harrowby is benignant:

for the Earl of Lauderdale, it does not appear that there is a soft seat in all the Upper House. He has not, indeed, tried the Bishops' benches, or the woolsack, or the throne; but he has made tentation of seats in divers other places, and I have never heard that he retained any of them very long, or appeared to feel very much at his ease while in them. That the Earl of Lauderdale has seen meet thus to change his position, I am far from wishing to characterise as any thing wrong: the Apostle's maxim, "Try all things," is a very good one, even in politics, provided that it be followed in close juxta-position by the words which are inseparably connected with it in Holy Writ,—"Hold to that which is best." But even here, if I were making the concession in an argument with the "shrewd" (I cannot even coin the right word here, for it is not exactly shrewd, it is not exactly acute, it is not profound, and it is any thing but either judicious or circumventive,) Earl himself, I should have to concede the last word with a gloss as long, and, if I could, almost as learned and logical, as one of his own political pamphlets. The scope and tendency of this annotation would be to establish clearly both the *quid* and the *necquid*, as to whom and what "the best" should be for, what should be the law of its application, and by whom that law should be administered.

Far be it from me, however, to entangle myself in the niceties of so very curious and complicated a piece of machinery, as that which produces the kind, the consistency, or the contradictions, of any man's politics. Rational liberty demands that a politician should, if irresistible motives prompt him thereto, be a Tory this year, and a Whig the next, just in the same manner as some stripling saunterer in the Babylonian Bear-garden garnishes his face with mock mustachios there, and claws them off when he goes down into the country to recruit the exhaustion of his purse and his person by the liberality of his indulgent parents.

That there are not honest and conscientious men, —men who are able, and, if necessity required it, willing, to give satisfactory reasons both for the faith and the practice that are in them, it would be worse than absurd to suppose,—unless, indeed, in those out-of-the-way cases where an individual forms the whole party within himself; and these, like the Philosopher's Stone, or the Irreducible Case, and probably also the North-west Passage, are not to be discovered or solved by any established rule or known formula. But if this be once conceded, (and he who will not concede it is not a person with whom to argue,) the propriety of a man's changing from one party to another is in the high road to demonstration. It must be supposed that those honest and

conscientious men espoused the party, upon a firm conviction that their so doing was right; even if wrong, the charge against them is merely one of error in judgment, and it would be somewhat difficult to prove it to be even that; for he who is unable to find any sinister or selfish motive for another man's belonging to a different party from himself, would require to be more than usually free from party feelings, and party prejudices, before he could venture to decide whether that other were or were not in error. It is the fault or the feeling of many men, and of none more than politicians, who write themselves down for a large credit in the books of liberality, to be more watchful over the purity and consistency of other men's motives than of their own. This may be very natural, but it is not very wise; inasmuch as every man, being best acquainted with his own failings, would conduce most to the general good, by attending to and correcting them.

When, therefore, I say that the Earl of Lauderdale has occupied seats facing various ways in the House of Peers, I state it as a matter of insulated fact, and not as one of the argumentative positions from which any inference is intended to be drawn. My object is not "to point a moral," but "to adorn a tale;" and if the tale which lies in my way has not many ornaments, my duty and my

interest both conspire in disposing of the few that it has to the best advantage.

The Earl of Lauderdale, though he claims considerable pretensions both to range and to depth as a politician, always struck me as being acute by nature, rather than well-informed by regular and unsophisticated study. I should not be disposed to repose much confidence in his judgment; and I ground this scepticism as well upon the changes which conviction (of course) has caused him to make, as upon the arguments that he has used, and the conclusions that he has arrived at, both on the one side and the other. But though I would not rest much on his judgment in the selection of the principles and the arguments which he selects, I must allow him great merit for the logical skill and logical clearness with which they are managed. If he were as much a master in the taking up of good positions, as he is in the defending of them after they are taken up, few men of his time would have, or deserve to have, more power, or make a stronger impression.

In the air and manner of Lord Lauderdale, there is not much to command either affection or admiration, and if he be by turns tired of both sides of the House, I rather think that both sides of the House are by turns tired of him, and that in this respect accounts between them are very

nearly balanced. His aspect is angular and hard—indicative of a sullen temperament. His voice, though strong, is harsh—grates upon the ear like a piece of unpolished and unoiled machinery; his language, though very forcible, is perhaps coarser than that of any other Peer; and though his style be bold—very bold, there is about him a hardness of manner, and a continual expression of partisanship, which render his influence more limited than from his talents, and especially from his acuteness, one would be led to suppose.

Considerations in which parliamentary eloquence and senatorial skill have certainly no concern, induce one to look round in the House of Lords, in order to discover the Duke of Wellington; and he who like me catches there his first glance of that successful warrior, can hardly fail to feel a little disappointed. Nothing proves more forcibly the utility of the division of labour, and of a man seeking for honour and emolument, in that way which his talents and his desires point, than a comparison of the Duke of Wellington's great renown as a warrior, and his comparative want of renown as a statesman. Either war or debate, or both, have changed, or the Duke of Wellington has not such a range of powers as the great Argyle, of whom the poet sung, that he shook the senate and the field with the same sort of shaking; for though

the gallant Duke unquestionably did shake many a well foughten field with most tremendous charges, and the loudest trumpet notes of victory; yet it struck me, that if ever he were to shake the Senate at all, he would give it a shaking that would excite few men's envy. It is impossible for a Briton not to feel anxious to see this famed Peer; but really it would be decidedly for the interest of Lord Wellington himself, and no way injurious to the interests of his country, that his senatorial displays should be as few and as far between as possible. In the field he has won glory enough; and for aught I know, or wish to know, he has won it by means, with which I at least have no desire to quarrel; but from any exhibition in the way of eloquence, which I have seen him make, or heard of his making, I do not think that the laurels of the warrior will become more green in their leaves, or more lasting in their nature, by any addition that can be made in the House of Lords. In those requisites, both of nature and of education, which fit a man for gaining victory there, his original conformation, his path in life, or both together, have made him very deficient. Nor need it be said that the Ducal warrior has been too much occupied in fields of battle for attending to the principles of business, or the force and graces of rhetoric; and that now that he can attend to his duty as a senator,

he will improve in these: for no man can contemplate his cheerful temper, his perfect satisfaction with himself as he is, and the air of importance with which he delivers what would be mere trifles in any ordinary Peer, with any hope that he will improve. Whatever may be a man's power of improving himself, he never will put that power in operation without a conviction that it is needed; and, indeed, without the evidence of such a conviction, no man can be certain that the power exists. Nobody has a right to quarrel with the Duke's appearance in the House, or the way in which he essays to make an impression upon its wisdom; but every man who wishes well to the permanence of his fame—and the fame of a British warrior is not a thing to be trifled with, will be anxious that he should stake the security of it upon as few Parliamentary displays as possible. There may not be any necessary connexions between those talents which enable a man to marshal soldiers, and those which enable him to marshal syllogisms; and, indeed, one who studies the subject, must easily see that the profession of the hero rather tends to eradicate many things which are requisite in that of the orator. No doubt, in as far as both are disciplinarians, both are the better for it; but here, and the advance is by no means a great one, the parallel stops. Though the commander of the army

arranges and directs, he contributes nothing to the essence of that which constitutes the strength of the army. The men and the *matériel* are not furnished by him; and if the greatest conqueror that ever conquered were forced to depend upon his personal resources, the tale of his actions would be by no means a brilliant one. The orator, on the other hand, is general and army together; he is the blunderbuss and the blow, as well as the superintendant who tells when the one shall be fired and how the other shall be struck. The one is in a great measure dependent upon the exertions of others; the other depends wholly upon himself: hence the exercise of any one of the vocations is hostile to the perfection of the other. There is another difference: the warrior, unless he has warred in a particular manner and for a particular purpose, cannot feel the glow of that internal fire—has not room for the play of those elements of freedom, which are essential to the formation of a first-rate orator. A well-disciplined mercenary or standing army, is either useless and unsafe, or it is a despotism of the very closest kind. The great body of those who compose it, instead of being permitted to exercise their judgment as to whether what they are about be right or wrong, must not even be informed beyond the single step they are taking, lest that information should be communicated to

the enemy. Such a school is by no means the one in which to learn that scrutinizing into the causes and consequences of things which constitutes an able orator, or that independence of feeling and of thought, which forms the very essence of a splendid one. A successful public speaker must always affect the highest regard for the principles of liberty and independence; and the only difference is, that if he really be the advocate of liberty, he expresses this regard in good earnest, and consistently throughout; whereas if his leaning be the other way, he endeavours, like the Athenian, to conceal the deadly weapon in the wreath of flowers.

I have ventured upon these reflections, without any view either of condemning the Duke of Wellington for not being an eloquent man, or of justifying any attempt at senatorial display which is not supported by the requisite degree of power. The world is continually convincing us that no man can be great in every thing; no man should therefore be over-greedy of making the attempt; and really there are few persons of the present age who have more reason to rest satisfied with the reward and the renown which they have gotten, than the Duke of Wellington,—nor can he in any way add to these by any effort that he can make in the House of Lords. But when men have arrived at the Duke's eminence as public characters, there is no standing still. If

a new effort, and especially an effort in a new direction, does not bring an accession of glory, it is always sure to cloud a little the brightness of that which was formerly acquired; and when once men of great name begin to descend, they, like bodies of great weight, descend with a rapidly increasing velocity.

In his proper element the Duke of Wellington is a grand climax;—and there cannot be a better one at which to adjourn my debate on the Lords to another chapter.

CHAPTER X.

THE HOUSE OF LORDS γ.

"What! will the line stretch out to the crack of doom?
Another yet!" SHAKSPEARE.

HAVING closed the last chapter with my humble attempt to add one little leaf to the laurels of the "Great Captain of the age," I cannot begin this one in a more appropriate manner than by just touching a point or two in the outline of his elder, and, soldiering apart, his more able, and perhaps more influential brother, the Marquis of Wellesley.

It matters little what was the cause of his being called upon to accept the great "Chiltern hundred" upon the other side of St. George's Channel, nor does it matter much for my present purpose whether his sojourning in that land, where nothing appears to thrive but the Church—and it thrives mainly, because the majority of the people profess another faith, and thus the established parson, having only some half dozen of persons to convey to

heaven, can convey them with greater ease and certainty, and at the same time have more leisure to manage his own matters—has been effective in bettering his own condition, in bettering the condition of Ireland, in bettering both, or in injuring the one or the other; but this much is certain,—that the removal of Marquis Wellesley has left in the Upper House of Parliament a blank which has not yet been filled up.

When "in voice," the Marquis was a very splendid and by no means an ineffective declaimer. His temperament possessed all the sanguineness and ardour which characterize his countrymen when their hearts are unstung and their hopes unblighted. He is a man of very considerable natural powers, and those powers he has cultivated with more than lordly assiduity and success. The Marquis never struck me as belonging to the class of philosophical orators, strictly speaking; nor unto those whom I should reckon the best qualified for legislating either to a great people, or to a people in great difficulties. I never could bring myself to think that his judgment was the very soundest in the world; and his logic always struck me as being, though often pleasurable, loose, and without even that peculiar concatenation which characterizes Irish argument in a shrewd and well-educated native of the Sister Kingdom. To make up

for any deficiency of this kind, however, the Marquis is exceedingly well gifted in the externals of oratory. His voice is just as powerful as that of his ducal brother is feeble; and the self-satisfaction which, in the warrior, one feels half disposed to characterize as being petulant, takes in the Lord Lieutenant that more exalted form to which one feels disposed to give the appellation of consequential. His language, although it be not covered and coloured with the wild flowers which are indigenous to the Hibernian fashion of the King's English when warmed, is exceedingly showy; the structure of his orations is highly rhetorical, and in his bearing and expression he has all the statesman-like indications of a Machiavel.

There are few members in the House of Peers, whose appearance, whose manner, and indeed whose general effect, are calculated to make a more immediate and agreeable impression upon a casual visitor, and one whose prejudices have not been previously won by a name, than Lord King. This nobleman has, perhaps, the most playful temperament, and he certainly does make the most frequent attempts at wit, of any one in the assembly. Not that he deserves the character of one whose object it is to make others merry: that would be an object altogether incompatible with the composition and the business of the House; and if the Peers

of England, in Parliament assembled, were to occupy themselves in joking or in listening to jokes, it would be much more a cause for sorrow than for mirth. The dignity, the decorum, the self-importance, and, above all, the real importance of the Upper House of Parliament, demand a stateliness of deportment, a measuredness of speech, and a suspension of all the more light and frivolous qualities of human nature, which, though they occasionally give to their lookings and their sayings what gay and giddy men would reckon an overseasoning of absolute dullness, are yet essentially necessary in order to make the boundary, which one is led to suppose should ever subsist between high-bred and nicely-trimmed nobility, and the wild exuberance of nature in freemen of common rank, as clear and definite as the canons of precedency require. It is with this limitation, that Lord King may be accounted the wit of the Upper House,—

"A wit 'mong Lords, 'mong wits a lord."

Neither his original powers, nor his acquired information, appeared to me as being of the very highest order; but still they are very considerable, and a good way above the average. Although there be playfulness and wit in the manner of his speaking, the matter is always argumentative, managed with considerable judgment, and close and clear in

its logic. He is not a very profound reasoner, but he is always intelligible, and generally sparkling. He is somewhat given to fables and apologues; and though he perhaps introduces them too often, and continues them too long, he becomes more powerful by using them, than if arguments of the same weight were stated in plain and simple terms.

His appearance both to the eye and the ear is very much in his favour. His manner is elegant, with a liveliness that never degenerates into familiarity on the one hand, or into unpleasant sharpness on the other; and his expression is so open and candid, that you cannot help regarding him as being as honest and consistent in heart and conduct, as he is prepossessing in his general appearance. His voice is very full and clear; so that without any of that apparent straining and effort which make it painful to hear some speakers, or any of that mouthing or rumbling which makes it disagreeable to hear others, the ear catches without difficulty every syllable that he utters: his language, too, is correct, and there is a neatness and closeness in his style, which do not usually accompany that figurative and allegorical kind of eloquence in which he is so prone to indulge.

Another warrior Lord now put in his claims for attention, and put them in very different, both in substance and in manner, from the "First Captain

of the age:" this was the Earl of Rosslyn, who, though far behind the Duke of Wellington in the fortune, if not in the abstract merit of a soldier, is immeasurably before him in all the attributes of a Statesman; indeed, he looks much more the conquering hero than any other personage. There is that staidness in his temperament, which one would presume of an Abercrombie or a Washington; and he seemed so cool, so self-centred, so intimately acquainted and satisfied with the ground upon which he stood, and withal so decided, that the impression which he made appeared to be one of more unmixed respect for his ability and his integrity, without any reference to his influence at Court or connexion with party, than that of almost any other Peer in the House. Trained in early life in the knowledge of the Constitution and laws of his country — an eloquent advocate of the liberties of the people, and at the same time a gallant, devoted, and successful officer in the service of the King, Lord Rosslyn is calculated to command the attention and win the respect of all parties. His natural powers are very considerable, and he has neither stinted them by confiding them to a single object, nor wasted them on trifling or momentary topics. He is a very close logician, shows very considerable judgment, and though he has few of the more shining ornaments of a pro-

fessed rhetorician, he is a very able reasoner. He never by any chance captivates the fancy, or takes such a hold of the passions as makes his hearer lose sight of the grand object he has in view,—the establishment of truth. Wit and humour, satire and declamation, he has none; and there is an air of plain and stern dignity about him, which, when he speaks, makes you regard those lighter attributes as things of too filmy and inefficient a structure for being grafted upon the solemn grandeur of lordly eloquence. His voice is hard and unmusical, his language plain, and his style simple; his whole manner, indeed, and his whole matter, proclaim him to be a man of the most undaunted courage, the most unshaken firmness, and the most straight-forward conduct. To one who attends the House of Lords as a place of elegant amusement, and expects to hear fine things said, and in a fine manner, Lord Rosslyn must appear somewhat cold, and stiff, and formal; but to those who weigh what is said in the balance of reason, he will always appear in a favourable light; and, from the attention which both sides of the House pay to him, I should suppose that though his adherence to Whig principles has been perfectly steady, he is supposed, and indeed found to be, remarkably free from the bias and prejudice of a mere party man.

Considering the length of time that I had heard

great political importance attached to his name, there were few with whose appearance I was more completely disappointed, than with that of Lord Grenville. That his Lordship has not a considerable degree of the power, and a very great degree of the pomp and the state of a Senator about him, I do not mean to assert, because no man could have been listened to as he has been listened to, or have led as he has been supposed to lead, without those qualities; but there is a studied artifice and a repulsive haughtiness about him, which constantly force one to suppose that he likes the opinion which he states, more on account of its being his, than from any conviction or even care about its abstract justice or practical value. You find it utterly impossible to feel towards Lord Grenville any of that hearty sympathy which you have for Lord Holland, or any of that regard which you cannot help feeling for the mildness of Liverpool, the benignity of Harrowby, or the calm manliness of Rosslyn: neither do you attribute to him the moroseness of Grey, nor the sullenness of Lauderdale. His lip has not the stern and unrelaxing pride of the one of these Noblemen, neither do his whole features pucker into the irony corrugations of the other. The moroseness of Grey seems to arise from an inward feeling, that he is not himself so great a man as he could wish; the sullenness of Gren-

ville has more the appearance of springing from a question that he holds, as to whether the world do hold him, or are capable of holding him, in the same estimation in which he holds himself. Grey looks as if he had, in the pride of his own nature, and the consciousness that the line of political action which he has taken is the right one, chosen that path without a calculation of its remote consequences; and he evinces that his own approbation is the grand meed of applause which he has had constantly in view: Grenville bears himself as though he were less anxious about the correctness of his principles, and the consistency of his conduct, than about making himself dazzling and conspicuous in the eyes of others. Both are stern and moody in the substratum of their characters; but the garnish of the one being pride, and that of the other vanity, accounts for the differences of their appearance and their conduct. In talents and in information, Lord Grenville is by no means equal to the other; neither is his political judgment so sound, or the structure of his orations so clear and logical: his voice, however, is much more commanding; it is one of the most powerful, and at the same time the most musical, in the House. In his language he is elegant, even to fastidiousness; and the polish and artifice of his style are injurious to the effect, not only of his reasoning, but also of

his declamation. There is a great deal of pomp and stateliness in his manner, and his bearing and expression are haughty in the extreme. To hear Lord Grenville once, and to hear him in one of the best of his declamatory moods, is very striking; but, somehow or other, frequent repetition spoils the whole effect,—a feeling that the words which are selected and said so carefully, are words of course, steals across one, and one turns away from the lofty tropes of Lord Grenville, as from a fire that consumes but does not shine.

The Marquis of Lansdown, also, struck me as being a Peer whose abilities have been very much overrated; and who, had he been the founder of his dynasty, would have occupied a station a good deal different from that which he now holds.—Lansdown's talents and acquirements, notwithstanding the hereditary claims which he has to being a political arithmetician, are certainly not superior to those of Lord Grenville; while his manner, although it be free from the sourness and the pomp of the other, is altogether of a humbler caste.—Lansdown is cheerful, but there is a great deal of finesse and artifice about him; and his speeches are so incumbered with words, that one cannot always see the object at which he drives, and hence one is tempted (very unjustly, it may be) to suspect that he has some object which he

does not avow. He has the sound of a political philosopher without the sense, and the breadth of a metaphysician without much of the depth. It might be his mere manner, but really the principles and the intentions of the Marquis of Lansdown, when first I listened to him, struck me as being somewhat dubious, and the impression has not been removed by subsequent observation.

Among the younger members of the Upper House, Lord Ellenborough may be "quoted" as the one who speaks the most; but whether the most to the purpose, I presume not to say. He possesses considerable powers, and, in the exercise of those powers, he sometimes evinces greater acuteness than those who have a name as orators. He selects and pronounces his words with a very commendable degree of propriety, but his air and manner are exceedingly conceited,—so much so, that he is very apt to leave, upon the mind of a stranger, an impression that that speech, which in all probability is the extemporary production of the moment, and delivered in perfect earnestness and good faith, is a piece of acting. But still, actor or not, there is a great deal of originality about his Lordship; and though, in as far as my judgment and experience enable me to decide in such a matter, his conceit is of more vigorous constitution than his genius or his judgment, still

Lord Ellenborough commands more attention than any Peer of the same standing, who like himself professes to lean upon none of the great parties, but to stand in his own strength.

It would be injudicious farther to pursue this analytical catalogue of the Lords Temporal. Most of those who remain are somewhat dull in reality, and would of course be duller in a delineation at second hand. Indeed, notwithstanding the decorum and respectability of the House, and notwithstanding the impression which its greater efforts make upon the country, if some three or four, or at most half a dozen of speakers, were removed from it, its charm as an intellectual entertainment would be nearly at an end. It may be, that its capacity for doing the real business of the country would not thereby be diminished, because it very frequently happens that the most splendid men are not the most serviceable; but as both Houses of Parliament have a duty to perform which is altogether of a higher caste than the modelling of statutes, and the discussing of local or even general measures of police and politics, the men of splendid talents are those who, upon every account, are the most desirable. The real business, whether it be part of the general administration of the country, or of the local administration of a particular district, is never done at the grand displays

which call forth the eloquence of the House, and send that eloquence abroad to delight or to astonish the people. That is done either by the Government or other parties at their business-meetings and consultations; or it is done partly there, and partly by Committees of the House, who hear evidence, and scrutinize into the details and the facts, in a manner incompatible with the nature of a public debate. Such debates are, therefore, appeals to the public, more than any thing else; and this is the reason why it is desirable that they should sustain the loftiest character possible.

One branch of the House of Lords I had almost forgotten: the Lords Spiritual,—the Archbishops and Bishops of the Church of England, with delegates from the Protestant Church of Ireland. Strictly speaking, their object is much more limited than that of the Lords Temporal; for although they take precedency as Temporal Barons, yet they do this rather by a fiction of law, than by any thing approaching to reality. A Temporal Peer is understood to occupy his seat in the House in consequence of his ancestry—to leave the succession to his heirs; whereas an Archbishop or Bishop, as a Peer, has neither heir nor ancestor. They are the representatives of the clergy; and though they may take a share in all the legislative and judicial functions of the Temporal Peers, their natural

function, and indeed the function to which they chiefly attend, is watching over the interests of that body of which they are in fact the representatives. Those who are not so familiar with the practices of the English Constitution, as to consider that it could not be very much changed for the better, are apt to consider the presence of the higher dignitaries of the Church in the Upper House of Parliament, while the lower members of the same establishment are by law excluded from the House of Commons, as an anomaly. Probably it is one; probably it would be better either to admit Priests into the House of Commons, or to exclude Bishops from the House of Lords: but my object is not to speculate about what would be better,—it is merely to cast a hasty glance upon what is; and, in doing this, I cannot help stating that the Lords Spiritual, how much soever they may add to the dignity and purity of the House, contribute not much to its eloquence. That they do show great attention to the interest of the Church and clerical establishment, is very proper, because the fact could not be otherwise; that they should deliver their opinions upon all questions where civil and ecclesiastical laws come into collision, is very advisable; that the majority of them should be steady friends of the administration, is a matter of course; and that they, as ministers of a religion, the statutes and the

doctrines of which are immutable, should oppose themselves to all changes, is a matter with which nobody has a right to quarrel,—provided they do not thrust themselves ostentatiously forward, in merely carnal disputes among men or nations. The precise line of their conduct is so very narrow and delicate, and it is so exceedingly difficult to preserve the calmness of the spiritual character, upon an arena of temporal strifes, that the wisest course which they can pursue is, unless upon subjects that are obviously ecclesiastical, to speak as seldom, and say as little, as ever they can. They seem to be aware of this; and accordingly we find less of the clerical eloquence of England recorded in the debates in the House of Lords, than the learning and the power of the English clergy would lead a stranger to suppose.

Of the whole bench of bishops, the only one who struck me, as thrusting the baron somewhat more prominently forward than was seemly for the mitre, was the Bishop of Peterborough; and I am not sure that, learned as he is, the church gains much by the ardour of his zeal. Dr. Marsh is evidently a man not gifted with the very highest natural powers, nor yet, as it should seem, with the clearest perception of the way in which those powers should be managed to the greatest advantage. But if it were possible for acquired know-

ledge, either in variety or in extent, to compensate for inferiority of intellect, few men would be entitled to more consideration than Dr. Marsh. Clear and comprehensive views of the grand principles of human society he cannot indeed take, because no teaching, no study, seems capable of enabling a man to take these: but still, in as far as ability can be conferred by multifarious learning, Dr. Marsh is an able man. Perhaps, indeed, it is his very ability in this way which renders him so unpleasant as a parliamentary speaker. When a man of books comes into contact with other men who have read the volume of nature itself, and disputes with them about the proper arrangement and reading of that volume, he is always in danger of appearing dogmatical, and the stubbornness of his dogmas is ever likely to be in proportion to the extent of his reading: Dr. Marsh is accordingly the greatest dogmatist in the Upper House; and this quality of the matter of his speaking is not redeemed by any thing in the manner. He is much more of a casuist than of a logician: his voice, though loud enough, has something starched in its tones, which, however well it may be fitted for the grave solemnity of a pulpit, does not accord with a public assembly; in which, instead of the many listening with calm and submissive attention to that which is delivered by the one, every man has a liberty of

speaking for himself, and requires to guard against criticism, reply, and it may be a refutation, from which the labours of the pulpit are entirely free.

It might be supposed that the ministers of a religion, the principles of which came by immediate inspiration, the precepts of which inculcate the purest morality and the most unbounded benevolence, and the whole strain of which is incalculably more sublime and spirit-stirring, than any thing which concerns the mere regulation of men upon earth, would be by it schooled into an extent of knowledge, a love of liberality, and a purity and fervour of eloquence, against which no temporal Peer could for a moment stand up. It might farther be supposed, that, as the dignitaries of the Church of England go through not only more of the forms, but more of the realities of artificial teaching, than the Lords Temporal, and are, by the sacredness of their offices, the strictness of their habits, and the sustained and sacerdotal tenor of their lives, exempted from many of the frailties by which the others are necessarily beset, they should be more than matches for those others in every power and in every attribute of mind. But such is not the fact: those dignitaries, excellent scholars, learned divines, orderly and studious men, and powerful preachers, though they be, cut, in the House of Lords, what one would feel disposed to call rather

a sorry figure,—a figure so sorry, that the hierarchy profits not much by the senatorial labours of these its most exalted sons.

Nor does it require a great deal of reflection to discover that this must be the case; for, without pretending to preach a homily from the text of the impossibility of serving two masters, whether those two masters happen to be "God and Mammon," or not, it may be laid down as an axiom—or if that be accounted too summary a mode of procedure in a matter so grave, it may be demonstrated from the whole tenor of history, that no man has been, and therefore there is no reason to hope that any man shall be, a zealous, constant, and conscientious minister of an established church, and an ardent, eloquent, and efficient politician, according to the flesh. In the first place, the paths of the divine are so straight-forward and so clear, that he who has been long accustomed to them, and who loves them, cannot get forward in the crooked and clouded ways of mere earthly statesmen. The current of the divine's thoughts runs above all the weaknesses and wickednesses of mankind; and from his sacred height he looks down upon those weaknesses and wickednesses as matters that are to be pitied and amended. Though erring mortals be the object of his labour, the implements with which he works are unerring and divine; while

the politician has to grapple with human infirmities by human strength, and must depend on his own judgment; while the other has a higher guide. In the second place, the minister of religion, putting himself, as he naturally does, in the place of Him whose minister he is, comes forward, not to inquire for the discovery of truth, or to argue for its establishment, but to demand implicit obedience to that which he is fully convinced those who hear him must believe. Although, therefore, a minister of religion may be ever so eloquent in the enforcing of the doctrines and duties of that religion, he is, from the very nature of his office, the worst qualified of all men for withstanding contradiction, and debating about subjects the foundation of which is doubtful or obscure. The very clearness and certainty of those matters with which he is familiar, lead him into dogmatism, whenever he comes down to the level of ordinary reasoners. The mysteries of religion being above his comprehension as a mere man, it is very natural that the mysteries of human society should be below his comprehension,—at any rate, the decided manner in which he feels himself justified to state the former, disposes him to state the latter without that process of ratiocination to which the more acute of mere men are accustomed, and without

which they will not be settled in matters which concern only this present life.

That the Lords Spiritual of the British Parliament are neither the most eloquent nor the most argumentative of its members, is not, therefore, to be imputed to any inferiority of mind on their part, compared with their temporal brethren; and that dogmatism, that casuistry, and that pedantic style, which would be very offensive in Lord Liverpool or Lord Grey, are not only excusable, but unavoidable, in the Lord Bishop of Peterborough.

A minute investigation of the reasons why men appear or act in one way rather than another, is, however, always a very difficult, and never a very agreeable or satisfactory labour; nor would I have touched upon it at all, had it not been that an implicit adherence to truth imposed upon me the necessity of saying of Dr. Marsh what might have been construed into disapprobation and censure if he had not been a churchman and a bishop. What I have offered in explanation will, I trust, prevent such a construction; and in this hope I shall here close my notice of that able, orderly, and important, though somewhat dull and slow-going engine—the House of Lords,—an engine which, however, is one of the most stately and the most useful in Babylon the Great.

CHAPTER XI.

THE HOUSE OF COMMONS a.

Not that I think those pantomimes,
Who vary action with the times,
Are less ingenuous in their art
Than those who duly act one part;
Or those, who turn from side to side,
More guilty than the wind and tide.

BUTLER.

SPLENDID as is the character of the House of Lords, grave and dignified as are the bearing and aspect of its members, important as are the duties which it is called upon to perform, watchful as it is at all times of the integrity of existing interests, and firm as have at times been the stands which it has made for liberty, it is not the branch of the Legislature to which the people in general look with the greatest interest, or claim with the greatest fondness as being their own. When the people resort to that House, they have always a sort of feeling that they are mere spectators — that

though they be listening to a splendid drama, in which the actors have prepared and can go through their parts well and orderly, yet that it is still merely a drama, to delight by its pomp and its effect; or, if it be to have any practical influence, it is to have that rather because of the moral which it inculcates, than on account of any actual and earnest interest which the high members of such an assembly can be supposed to take in the affairs of ordinary and untitled men.

This may be a prejudice, and there is no doubt that in part it actually is so, but still it is a natural prejudice, and so there is no use for quarrelling with it. The yeomen of the country, and the burgesses of the towns, cannot easily persuade themselves that persons, who can claim admission into the superior Council of the State, merely because certain other men, who lived before or since the Conquest, were their fathers, and without any reference to those personal powers and possessions which are the only fair grounds of distinction among yeomen and burgesses, have either the same feelings or the same views as they have. The peerage is a very splendid establishment, it is quite a Constitutional one, and it may be both necessary and useful,—ay, and there is no doubt that it has been so; that, being of a nature not to be changed either by the changes of the monarch,

or the dynasty, or by the waywardness of the people, it has, in times of trouble, saved them both; and, if unlooked-for changes should operate a return of those times, it might save them again. But still the peerage, splendid and useful as it may be, is an institution extrinsic of the people, and thus there is no bringing them to a belief that they are any thing but spectators of its movements and its performances; nor is it at all desirable that this feeling or prejudice, or whatever else it may be, should be wholly removed. In all those stations and offices where there is an importance extrinsic of the personal merits of the holders, it is desirable that there should be a portion of that dim mysteriousness, which adds in greatness and grandeur what it takes away in clearness and familiarity. Place a castle upon the summit of a hill, and it looks a tiny and insignificant thing; set a man upon the top of a precipice, and he is shrunken within his native size. You compare the object with the pedestal, and it loses by the comparison: but the moment that you have the hill or the precipice shrouded in mist, through the fleeces of which the castle or the man is indistinctly seen, there is a wonderful accession both of majesty and magnitude. It is the same with men who are placed upon an artificial elevation; and he who would wish to remove that misty veil, to which no

inconsiderable portion of their apparent greatness is owing, would not judge wisely.

It is chiefly for the purpose of giving effect to its judicial functions, that this magnifying obscurity about the House of Lords is desirable. It operates much in the same way as the canonicals of the ministers of religion and the robes of the administrators of law: There is nothing absolutely sacred in a surplice, a stole, or a mitre; neither is there one grain of wisdom in an ermined robe, or a judicial wig. So much the contrary, that the things are, to the eye of abstract reason, absurd. Put the stole and the mitre upon a yeoman, and he would be hooted by the boys of the village as a fool,—put the robe and the wig upon a gentleman of Bond-street, and you would hold the fact of his being an ass as established beyond all question. When a Judge puts on the black coif of condemnation, and proceeds to pass that sentence which, when once put in force, not even Royal clemency can mitigate, a feeling of chilly horror—a cold curdling of the blood, runs through all those who have the hearts of men in them, and even the most abandoned and obdurate are hushed into a momentary silence; but if the same symbolical cap, all-appalling as it is in its proper place, were to be put on by a man who were to favour a jovial company

with a song, or even by the same Judge when about to propose a bumper to the King's health, at a public dinner, the whole solemnity both of the thing and the action would be clean gone,—there would be something so perfectly incongruous, so entirely ludicrous in it, that the most calm face would be worked into a smile, and the most substantial and quiescent sides shake with laughter. Now, when the Lords sit in judgment—and their civil judgment is formal and without appeal, and their criminal judgment the most solemn that can be, there are none of the external emblems of original or even delegated authority. Great as their power is, they ever use it, not because they have been chosen by the King or the people, as the fittest persons for exercising it—they do it from the mere fact of their belonging by creation or descent to the peerage; and therefore it is fitting for the purposes of justice, that some sort of veil should be drawn between them and the people.

With respect to the House of Commons, there is no such necessity. They are, or are understood to be, both of and for the people themselves; and therefore the interest which the public take in them is of a more hearty kind than that which they take in the Peers. When a Peer delivers a sentiment which is not in exact accordance with popular notions, folks are neither surprised nor

angry, because they have no personal relationship with him by whom the sentiment is uttered; and when a Peer utters any thing eminently popular or liberal, the people do not cheer and applaud him as they would a Commoner. The whole *esprit de corps* of the people, in short, leans toward the Commons. It is there that they are most upon the watch against improprieties, both of the men and of the system; and it is there that they bestow the warmest of their applauses, when they think that applause is due. When you speak of the Lords, you invariably make use of the cold third person "they;" when you speak of the Commons, you instinctively speak of them as being of "us." It is "their" house when you get into the Old Court of Requests; but when you enter the Chapel of St. Stephen, it is "ours." You feel at home and at your ease, without any of that consciousness of inferiority which steals upon you in the Upper House.

Nor is it merely on account of this felt or fancied relationship to yourself, that you prefer the House of Commons; there is a variety, an energy, and an expression of nature about it, for which it would be vain to look in the artificial stateliness of the House of Peers. In that House, be the speaker ever so eloquent, one, somehow or other, never loses sight of the coronet or the mitre;

whereas, in the House of Commons, even in those members which belong to the peerage, the man himself is the grand object of interest. If not all of one party, the Lords are all of one profession; but the Commons show all the changing shade of society. You not only have England, Scotland, and Ireland, delivering their peculiar opinions in their peculiar way; but you have a trace of all counties, and all cases of society in each of these divisions of the Empire. John Bull is every jot as gruff and as honest upon the benches of the House, as he is behind his counter or his plough; Sawney is every bit, as "pawky," as if he were selling a drove of black cattle or making application for an office; and Pat, in the House of Commons, is just as warm and as headstrong, as prone to throw away the trammels of logic, in order that he may run the faster with his words, as if he were upon the Curragh of Kildare, or the mountains of Ballynahinch. You never for a moment can mistake the one for the other. The English member has all the peculiarities of the Englishman. If he takes a position for the public, he takes it bluntly and frankly: he never conceals it, or goes about the establishment in defence of it by any sinister means. If he pursue a private object, he is alike candid: he never strives to hide the personal interest which himself, his party, or his constituents, may

have in it; he merely bends all his force to prove that that interest is deserving of support. The English orator has not much of the theoretic and general philosopher about him: he does not argue from the abstract rights of man, or the original principles of government, as arising from a sort of universal social compact, and being suited to the condition of all mankind. England is the regulating principle in all his disquisitions; and the test of political right or wrong with him, is mainly what has been done in England. If he be a supporter of the Administration for the time, the present practice of England is his standard of right; and if he belong to the Opposition, or oppose the Government upon what are called independent principles — not meaning thereby that sort of independence which is a sort of signal hung out by the man himself that he wishes to defend — then he takes his standard from some time gone by,—a time distant from the present, very much on the ratio of his own opposition. If he be no more than a Whig, he lets fly at the last Kings of the House of Stuart, denounces the measures which he opposes, as having a bias towards their policy, and places his confidence in the glorious Revolution of 1688. If he go beyond this, or above it, or below it—for there are men who give it all these names,—he takes his stand at a much more remote point of the Eng-

lish history,—a point so remote indeed, that if what he advances cannot be borne out by satisfactory evidence, the opposite proof is just as impossible, and this serves the purpose equally well.

Whatever, indeed, may be the species of an Englishman's oratory, its generic character is always matter of fact; and therefore an English orator, independently of the superior style of his diction, the superior grace of his manner, and the greater purity of his elocution, is always much more easily understood, and consequently much more agreeable to listen to, than a Scot or an Irishman. In his ordinary speaking, he deals with the ordinary occurrences of human nature—the plain practical results which are level to every capacity; and when he rises into eloquence, it is the eloquence of history, much more than of philosophy or of passion.

As the English members of the House of Commons far outnumber, and very far outweigh, those of the other two divisions of the empire, the general character of the House, both in the questions that come before it and in the manner in which they are discussed and disposed of, is decidedly English. The Scottish members, as such, are so few in number, so feeble in their powers, and generally so intent upon objects quite different from those which form the bases of an English-

man's parliamentary glory, that they hardly deserve being taken into the account. If, indeed, the talents and feelings of the Scottish nation were to be estimated from the majority, or even from the aggregate, of those members of the House of Commons, who, as one might say, "represent the representation" of that end of the island, then the estimate of them might be taken as moderate as heart could well desire. Almost, if not altogether, they are miserable speakers; and few of them have much to boast of on the ground of political character. To the general interests of the British Empire this may do no great harm; but that it is highly injurious to those interests of Scotland, which Englishmen do not understand, and therefore cannot be expected to advocate, is very evident. The laws, the municipal and the political institutions of Scotland, are so very different from those of England, that no zeal and no knowledge in the English ones can qualify Englishmen for preventing or removing their corruptions. It may be that the same general principle is applicable to both; but as even the ablest of the English deal much more in facts than in general principles, the consequence is, that the evils of much that is peculiar to Scotland pass without remedy, because nobody who can apply the remedy knows of their existence.

The Irish members are more numerous and more bustling than the Scots; and if they fail in bringing the case of Ireland fairly and clearly before the House of Commons, they certainly do not fail through taciturnity. But eloquence, or perhaps it is more correct to say words, may be faulty through excess, as well as through deficiency; and that man who needs to be told, that speaking too much upon any question may occasionally render it more dark, and remove the solution of it to a greater distance, than barely mentioning it, or even not speaking about it at all, is most assuredly no conjuror. In that which has never been mentioned to the collective wisdom of the House of Commons, there is some chance that the said collective wisdom may stumble upon the right path, even without a hint; or, if a hint be given, the wisdom and the subject will then meet together without any of the distraction of an ancient prejudice, and even without that aversion which all wise men and wise institutions have at being lectured. But if a matter be rung in the ears, day after day, and season after season—if there be almost a third of the set debates in the House about Ireland; and if, upon all cases where a little supplemental noise can be tolerated, the orators of the Sister Kingdom stand up to beat the never-failing calf-skin to the unchangeable burden of her interminable wrongs,—

then it is not in the ears of any assembly—were they even ten times longer, and ten times more anxiously pricked up than those of the sages of St. Stephen's, to bar the conclusion, that that in which there is so much gratuitous thumping and sounding, must have the sense pretty well battered out of it. Those who have been in the habit of attending the Gallery of St. Stephen's, and who have listened to that *vox non scripta*—that fine ethereal efflorescence of the tongue, which no pencil of reporter can fix down upon paper, and not the prince of printers' devils can consolidate into types,—who have, in the more lively moments of the House, heard the shrill moan of the venerable Sir John Newport,—and who, as late hours and the leaden god stole softly over the benches on either hand, have started from their own shares of the coming slumber, at the priggish prattle of Thomas Spring Rice, Esq. or the clicking hammers of Hutchison and Grattan, (not the other Grattan, God wot!) Macadamizing the particles of gravel from eloquence's shallowest brook, will both understand and appreciate what I mean; and must with me regret, that that has been lost in the infinitude of sound, which, long ere now, might have been won by a very very moderate concentration of sense.

In consequence of the, very probably interested, taciturnity of the Scots, and the unceasing whirlwind of the Irish, it is impossible to say that

the character, or the characteristic eloquence, of either of those nations, in their own representatives, at least, presents a breadth and permanence upon which the eye can take hold, comes with a power and an unity which can command an entrance by the ear, or shows that calm earnestness which can make sure of taking up a permanent abode in the heart. Your Scottish representative is constantly biting asunder his own words with his own teeth, as if something in his throat, which he is very anxious should not be discharged, were occasioning spasm and derangement in his organs of articulation; and he is also ever and anon concealing his breast with one, and sometimes with both of his hands, as if he knew that there were something there, which, if seen, would neither increase his honour nor promote his success. Your Irishman, on the other hand, seems to have too little both of occult and of avowed purpose, in that about which he sets so furiously to work; and while he is filling the House with the filmy shadows of things which never have had, and never can have substance, and making the broken and disjointed particles of the King's English whisk about and about,

"Light as the mote that daunceth in the beam,"

you cannot help thinking, that if one of those "rows" which keep the spirits of his country ever rippling on the surface, were to take place in the

lobby, he would leave the woes of Ireland to take care of the wrongs, snatch up the mace in lieu of a sprig, and dash heedlessly and heroically into the thickest of the fight.

But though, in consequence of Scottish subjects and Scottish eloquence being deficient, and Irish being in excess, St. Stephen's does not furnish you with that perfect portraiture of the three nations, which an assembly of their representatives, ill allotted as the members are, would lead you to expect; yet this is more than compensated by the great variety of individual character,—there being not a single shade of mind, from philosophy to absolute fatuity, and not a single rank or occupation in life, from the king upon the throne to the beggar on the dunghill, but might find one there worthy of aspiring to its possession, and capable of performing its duties. It is this congregating of all that is contrasted in aspect—this gathering together of all that is diversified in talent and in taste, which makes the House of Commons so high an intellectual treat both to natives and to foreigners. Its privileges are such, that however a man may have to muffle and mystify himself before he gets in, he may show off in his true colours the instant that he is there; for if he observe the forms of the House, which are not very difficult to be observed, and submit to its statutes, which upon its own

members are not excessively severe, he may give his tongue the utmost range against all the world; and be his artillery great or small—be it a cannon that would breach a stone revetment at a single discharge, or a pop-gun which would not ruffle the plumage of a humming-bird, that monarch is not so elevated, and that principle not so pure, as that he may not rattle away against them with the utmost impunity. This is a glorious privilege: and though a member may now and then run riot in the exercise of it; yet, to it more than to any thing else, are we indebted for that freshness and force which always characterize the debates of the Commons, and render them more striking, and, in as far as the public opinion of England, and indeed of the civilized world, is concerned, more successful, than the proceedings of any other assembly of politicians.

This perfect freedom of the House of Commons —this uncorrupted, and I may say incorruptible, independence in license, if not in construction or in conduct, is a sort of pledge, and no inefficient pledge, to England, that neither her representatives nor her ministers can be in whole, or in the majority, at the same time, very weak and very wicked men—that whatever may be the theoretical defects of this House, and of that part of her government which depends upon this House, both must be practically strong and efficient, and have much of

the show, and a good deal of the substance, of liberality. No doubt, the great range of opinion of which the House of Commons admits, and the unbounded license of speech which it confers upon its members, produce a good deal both of coarseness and of nonsense, which a system of severer discipline would repress. But no discipline, however tasteful and well managed, could be productive of that exuberant vigour to which perfect freedom leads; and, for the sake of the Broughams, the Cannings, the Huskissons, and the Robinsons, who burn, and shine, and illuminate, and please, within the walls of that chapel, one can easily be brought to forgive the prattle of fops, the puerility of fools, and the dullness of solemn and systematic drivellers. One knows that in a country, or even in an age, truly great men are never many—never any thing like one in a thousand; and therefore, if among the six hundred and fifty-one members of the House of Commons, there be found, upon the average, half a dozen of very able or very brilliant men, then that House may with perfect safety be said to be ten times better than if it were ballotted from the general mass of the people. When, too, it is borne in mind, that the performance of real business requires more dull and slow-going agents than those splendid members of the House, and that very often the man who has been the most skilful in adapt-

ing a measure to the very best interests of those for whom it is to pass into a law, is the least capable of making a clear and captivating statement in a public debate, then our reason for being satisfied with the House as it is receives a considerable addition of strength.

That the whole members of that assembly should ever dwindle down to mere committee-men—attorneys for examining and cross-examining witnesses, or juries to decide upon the facts of local cases as given in evidence, is by no means to be wished.—That is very good and very necessary as far as it goes, but it goes not the whole length, or any thing near the whole length, of parliamentary importance. This mere detail and business-part of the institution, is indispensable to its acting aright both in general and in local legislation; but there ought to be, within the walls of St. Stephen's, a spirit of unconfined liberality and unbending manliness, not only to answer to the call of the spirit of liberality and manliness without, but to be the watchman to arouse and the pilot to direct that external spirit. If all the members of Parliament were to give themselves up to the forms and the details of parliamentary business, they could never perform even that business aright; and the progress of society without would leave them so far behind, that they would become objects of pity

instead of admiration, and of ridicule instead of respect. If the fame of Parliament rested upon the Wynns, and the Brogdens, and the Giddy Gilberts,—excellent and expert routine and committee-men as they are,—few would throng to the Gallery of St. Stephen's, and not many more would read with avidity the reports of what would be spoken there.

The House, independently of all political differences, must invariably contain two parties,—one laborious, patient, and heavy, who would drudge for the public, and who, upon the principle of not muzzling the ox, are, perchance, allowed occasionally to drudge a little for themselves; and one who do less in the details, but who have the nation and the world for their audience and their judges—whose business it is to keep themselves up to every step which the world takes in all its multifarious improvements—who must be merchants and philosophers, literary men and men of taste—and whose lives must necessarily be, in a very great measure, devoted to those subjects. It is farther necessary that this higher and more intellectual order of parliamentary men should, in some ratio or other, be divided into those who support and those who oppose the administration of the time. The flint and the steel may lie side by side, till the one be decomposed and the other consumed with rust,

without eliciting a single spark: to do this they must come into smart collision; and it is just the same, in the more unrestrained and eloquent department of the British Senate. People cannot help siding with one party or with another,—wishing their favourite into office, and him whom they do not like, out; and possibly there may be cases in which such changes would be salutary for the country; but it requires no excess either of philosophy or of penetration to discover that the motives of the man thus wishing for change are by no means pure: if great politicians do not take a side without some personal motive, it is difficult to conceive how a side should be otherwise taken by small. It is impossible, however, to understand the Chapel of St. Stephen's, by speaking about it; and so I shall bid my readers look at it in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XII.

THE HOUSE OF COMMONS &.

The motion has been bruited; rolls of parchment
For weeks have made the tables groan; the seats
Are taken, and the gallery throng'd; the speakers
Are conning o'er their notes; and expectation
Is restless, till the mighty say be said.

ANON.

IMAGINE that some mighty field day—some Armageddon of the Gog, the Magog, and the Saints of Parliament, has come round—some day which has stood high in the hopes of the parties or of the public for years, and rubric in the notices of the House for weeks—some debate which has been thrice delayed at the request of the one party, and thrice at the request of the other, in order that the petitioning tools all over the country might have time to do their work,—has been finally fixed by a formal call of the House—that each orator has stuck his name upon the seat from which he means to hold forth, in order that his friends in the

Gallery may not mistake him—that the order of the leading combatants has been fixed—that the times have been appointed, at which all shall be in the House ready to cheer, and when they may whet their eloquence upon the touchstone of Bellamy's wine, till the leaden members have poured their heavy periods upon the agitated House, as oil is poured upon the waves of the tumbling sea—that the voters have been counted—and that the whole stand with charged barrels, primed vent, and lighted portfire, ready to let off one of those discharges, which, by their bullet, and yet more by their sound, do such havoc upon the feelings and the understandings of men: imagine this; and imagine farther, that it is about mid-day, and that you who have come from a distance, and for the first time, for the express purpose of seeing with your own eyes, and hearing with your own ears, those mighty looks and words of wisdom and eloquence, with the second-hand report of which you have so often been feasted. By "advice of friends," you have stuffed your pockets with sandwiches, and are elbowing your way amid the motley throng that are moving toward Palace Yard. You pass through that, without deigning a single word, or even look, of comment upon the exquisite beauties of the old architecture, or the unrivalled deformity of the new. The stately hall, with its

shapeless courts, might, for aught you care, be at the bottom of the Thames. Your object is beyond; and hard though be the struggle, you are determined to accomplish it. After perilling your neck upon one awkward step here, two or three awkward steps there, your coat and your pockets every where, from the freedom of the populace, you at last gain the lobby: but you gain the wrong one; the folding-doors which open over against the screen through which you entered, have no admission for you. The Cerberus, who gives ready admission to the representatives, necessarily excludes the represented; and though you produce the order from your County or Borough member, for whom you voted and tossed up your hat when he became such, and at whose expense you then dined—and haply did something else,—it proves not more availing than as much waste paper. You attempt to catch just one little glimpse at that grim chair, and those gloomy benches, about which you have heard so much; but in doing so you are forcibly pulled away, and threatened with the vengeance of the Sergeant at Arms, which, as you have been told, extends as far as Newgate. Escaping from the Scylla of the door-keeper, you stumble upon the Charybdis of a Jewess's orange-basket, the contents of which are immediately sent spinning all over the lobby, and you make your way toward the

staircase which conveys you to the Gallery. Your agitation and your haste conspire to give you a business-face, and so the lingering and listless crowd which hang upon the unshapely ascent readily make way, and you find yourself—outside a closed door in the dark. After a good deal of noise and kicking, and it may be swearing, especially if you are of the Sister Kingdom, and the question be Irish, the slit in the door is withdrawn, and your business demanded by a personage whom, from his self-importance, you would imagine to be the Speaker himself, but who is in reality nothing more nor less than Wright the door-keeper. Your Member's order is again presented; but it is again refused: you are told that admission cannot be obtained for several hours, and even then it cannot be procured for that; and when you are fairly in possession of this satisfactory piece of intelligence, the slit is closed, and you are left as much in the dark as ever. Here you are constrained to stand, with the door immovable on the one side, and the crowd continually pressing closer and closer upon the other. Your ribs are elbowed, your toes trod upon, your sandwiches almost squeezed laterally into your stomach, and yourself heavily taxed in perspiration and in patience for three long hours,—toward the close of which, however, Wright again opens the slit, and you have the satisfaction of

seeing those whose passes happen to be better countersigned than your own walking at their leisure into that Gallery which you are so anxious to enter, but cannot.

At last, however, the Speaker enters—the door opens—Wright pronounces the word "half-a-crown" —it is paid, and you are discharged away from the landing-place up the steps, and to the door of the Gallery, with as little effort, and as much velocity, as if a barrel of gunpowder had been burned at your heels. At the door you have time to pause again,—for you find that though you are the foremost of the public, and enter by the acknowledged and legitimate gate, yet, by some miraculous means or other, that public have previously contrived to fill that small cock-loft, which is denominated the Strangers' Gallery. Your pause is but a brief one, but you have time for a little meditation; and that which most readily and forcibly comes across you, is the different estimation in which your member is held at home and in St. Stephen's; nor can you help wondering, that so great a man should have given pounds to procure a seat in an assembly, where he is not reckoned worth half-a-crown, even by the door-keepers. You get into the Gallery, and modestly seat yourself on the rearmost step of the matting, from which, however, you are ejected by a very summary process by one of the representa-

tives—of the morning papers, who enters the House with an air of as much importance, and perhaps discharges as important, and certainly as difficult, a duty in it, as any one of the representatives upon the benches below. Ejected from this humblest place, you stand irresolute, the messengers ordering you to sit down, and you not seeing exactly where you are to sit down, till the same representative who displaced you, pulls you down upon the step immediately in front of him, and obligingly becomes your Cicerone, in as far as you require an index to the men and things that are before your eyes. It may be that he plays off upon you a few innocent waggeries, in consequence of your anxiety to be in a place which, to him, has many of the horrors of the tread-mill; but he is sure to set you right in the end, and equally sure to leave you in charge to his successor. Indeed, if you have never been in the House, and know not many of its members by sight, always attempt to get upon the seat next the reporters. You may hear them treating with scorn the men whom you worship, and cursing that eloquence which you are drinking in as the nectar of the gods; and if you are over inquisitive, or inquisitive at improper times, you stand a chance of being yourself rebuffed not in the softest phraseology: but still the real information which you may acquire from those

shrewd and intelligent, though not over-courtly personages, will far more than counterbalance those little matters, which, taken alone, would be anything but agreeable.

While you are snugly seated, and they are scraping their pens and pencils, handing round the jokes of the morning, and between whiles telling you the names of the members who are kicking their heels, conning their notes, or consulting their papers, you have leisure and spirits to glance round the House, and take notice of the theatre before the drama commences. The first thing that strikes you is its mean and sombre appearance. When at home you heard the Chapel of St. Stephen's spoken of, you naturally supposed that if there was not something of the grandeur and the grace of a national hall about it, there would be at least some of the venerable and imposing appearances of an ancient church. But you find that this place—the place where so much wisdom is accumulated, and whence so much eloquence is distributed over the world, ought to be called the Chest of St. Stephen, rather than the Chapel; for its square form, and its wooden texture, make it seem better adapted for a linen chest to the nation, or a storehouse to the Patent Steam-washing Company, than for accommodating the collective wisdom of England, Scotland, and Ireland. Not one vestige of the

ancient structure is to be seen. The whole walls are of wainscot, as dark and dingy as heart can desire; the flat roof is so close upon the Gallery, that it seems as if intended for a general extinguisher to the House; the Speaker's chair, bating the Royal arms, would do no honour to a provincial Masonic Lodge; the chandeliers and seats are not more tasteful than those of a dissenting meeting-house in a manufacturing village; and though some architect of external surfaces has contrived to garnish the end toward the Thames with funereal plumes, as if the whole wisdom of Parliament had gone into mourning for something dead which durst not be mentioned, yet the three windows which throw physical light upon the House are as common-place in their structure, and as round in their heads, as the country gentlemen who show forth their intellectual glimmering from the third bench upon either hand of the Speaker. The Strangers' Gallery is, as I have said, and you have seen, equally small and inconvenient: but on these accounts, it suits better with the name; because, were it larger, more easily accessible, or more convenient when one does get into it, then that part of the public who are fond of senatorial eloquence, would not be so great strangers to St. Stephen's Chapel as they are at present. Immediately before you stands the Speaker's chair;

and in it reclines the Speaker, himself, with the greatest urbanity, and the greatest order set forth both in his person and in his wig. The table is before him, with clerks at the corners; a hole below for receiving such petitions from the people as are ordered to lie *upon* the table; in the centre there are a few books and memoranda; at each side an empty box, upon which the Ministerial or Opposition speaker may beat the drum, when his arguments or his eloquence fail to awaken the nodding House at a late hour; and at the end nearest yourself, lies the mace—that venerable symbol of the power and privileges of the House, which was so much contemned by Oliver Cromwell. I may tell you, in passing, that those two sounding-boxes are peculiar to the House of Commons; and that they have given existence and name to a species of argument, which is as peculiar and as effective in St. Stephen's, as the cushion-thumping of Divines, or the *argumentum ad tabulam* among tavern politicians—the *argumentum ad arcam*—that most sonorous figure of parliamentary rhetoric,—a figure of which the late Marquis of Londonderry made constant use, and which is not despised or neglected by his eloquent and elegant successor, the Right Hon. George Canning.

To the Speaker's right—that is, upon your left, muster those who speak and those who vote with

the Administration. Ministers themselves, with the leading orators upon their side, occupy the seat next the table, stand upon the floor of the House, and show the whole length of their figures when they address it; and it is they, and they only upon this side of the House, who are permitted to resort to the *argumentum ad arcam*. The Opposition muster, in like manner, upon the Speaker's left,—those on the floor having privilege of the box, in like manner as the Ministerial members; and they who class not of the foremost rank being like those restricted to the sound of their own voices, which is, of course, held quite adequate to the expression of the most lofty things that they can utter. The country gentlemen, as having the greatest breadth of countenance—as being the most measurable statesmen, are posted about the middle, in order that they may lean against the pillars, like other Sampsons, when they weary, and that they may be seen to the best advantage. The two sets of benches are rounded inwards so that they meet together behind the Speaker's chair. This is deemed a sort of neutral ground; and upon it civilities and snuff-boxes are exchanged in the most courteous manner, by those who scowl defiance at each other whenever they come forward to the battle-field.

The side-slip over the Treasury-benches is set

apart for such members of the Opposition, as are not fond either of the stimulus of eloquence in the House below, or of that of wine in Bellamy's above; and the slip over the Opposition does the same service for the Treasury mutes. The benches in those slips are made so roomy, that the members upon the opposite sides—of whom Dennis Browne and William Ramsay Maule appeared to me to be, the *maxima*, can recline upon them without restriction; and they are so soft, that sleep upon them must be both balmy and refreshing, promoted as it often is by the lullaby that sounds from below.

No female is allowed to enter the Gallery of this House, unless she submit to wear that in public which, it may be, she wears regularly at home without any thing like submission; but females may, notwithstanding, have a bird's-eye view of the House, and hear the sound of its wisdom. There is a large ventilator just over the table; and if there be any thing very fine or very curious going forward, you may—if the House be stilly enough—hear the light patter of feet, and the softened hum of whispers there: or should you not be able to do this, then you may, by a very peculiar look that the Speaker puts on upon such occasions, know that some of the softer sex are aloft. Some may ask, why females are excluded

from the gallery of this "public" House? to which I know not better what to answer, than by asking, why they are prohibited from voting in the election of its members? and when this is answered to my satisfaction, I doubt not but I shall be able to solve the lesser enigma.

If you had been there on an ordinary evening—an evening upon which nothing of mightier sound was to be done than the distribution of some ten millions of the public revenue, or the disposal of some fifty Bills, each of which involved an object of great primary interest to the district by which it was desired, then the aspect of the House would have been different. The door which you found so long closed against you would have stood open, your Member's order would have procured you admission, you would have had the greater part of the Gallery to yourself, and you would have found the House as desolate upon your entrance as I first found the House of Peers. Upon such an occasion, the first business—prayers excepted, which never astonish any body—would have astonished you; and you would have been apt to suppose that Mr. Speaker was giving the few members present a lecture upon the first principles of arithmetic, after the fashion of Dr. Bell or of Joseph Lancaster; for you would have heard him repeating the names of the cardinal numbers

in a most melodious, though somewhat formal voice, and with very prolonged and incomprehensible pauses between,—keeping his eye all the while upon the clock, pleased apparently that it was outrunning his arithmetic. If it had got to four o'clock, before he got to the mystical number, thirty-nine, he would have adjourned, and gone to take his rest or his amusement; but if he had previously been enabled to count that number, he would have added himself to the list, and the forty would have proceeded to grapple with the business of the night, however intricate or however important.

Even upon a great day, such as that which brought you from the country, you find the first stage of the business any thing but interesting: for though sundry private and public Bills be forwarded a stage, you cannot understand what they are about; and though sundry petitions be presented, and questions put, you are unable to guess at the drift of the one, or the answers to the other. In those short readings, *causa brevitatis*, the Bills are often very amusing; and all that you can hear of a solemn legislative proceeding is as follows:—Dr. Phillimore, or Mr. Solicitor-General Wetherell, or some such profound but prosing personage, is called upon by the Speaker. If he be present, he answers to the call, by rising, smoothing down his

face with his hand, looking wisdom itself, and moving the second reading of "A Bill for amending an Act passed during the last Session of Parliament, for amending another Act passed in the Session before that, for amending the then existing Acts for regulating the solemnization of Marriages." Upon so joyous a subject you very naturally look for something which shall at the least be lively and amusing. But the Clerk moves to his feet with as much solemnity as the mover of the second reading, and delivers, in a voice which neither rises nor falls a single semi-tone during the delivery, these oracular words: "Whereas, great inconveniences have arisen from the solemnization of marriages:" upon which the Speaker tries the metal of the Members, "by yea and by nay;" and pronouncing that "the ayes have it," he sits down, and the deed of legislation is performed. Whether you happen to have been a principal in the solemnization of marriage or not, you do not question the truth of the proposition; but you cannot help pondering why so obvious, or at least so simple a truth, should need to be declared by the wisdom of the legislature. The amusement which you find or fancy at the solemn declaration of this *non sequitur*—springs wholly, however, from your own ignorance of Parliamentary business, and is no way chargeable upon the good sense of the

House. Indeed, it is the reverse: the members are supposed to be already acquainted with all the details and enactments of the Bill; and therefore, in those readings *pro formâ*, they require to hear nothing more than the first clause of the first sentence.

After the Marriage Bill is sent to enjoy its honey-moon, previous to being read a third time and passed, the learned Sergeant Onslow, or, as he is sometimes termed, *Slow-on*, rises to make his annual motion for the restoration of the remnant of Israel, by a repeal of the laws against usury, and a consequent permission to Solomon to exact as many per shents as his own liberal conscience will allow him for the use of de monish. Out of doors, opinions are somewhat divided upon this piece of legislation, because it seems doubtful whether it would or would not enable profligate young men to get rid of their money with less loss of time than by the means now existing; and, in a matter of such perplexity, the people without the House could not have had a better representative within than the learned Sergeant, who, though he has been working at it for years, yet has contrived to manage it in so very lawyer-like a style, that it does not appear to be one bit nearer being either adopted or rejected, than it was upon its first being brought forward. The learned Sergeant, however,

contrives to make a long and a rare speech upon the subject,—I say a rare speech, because not even the most voracious of the newspapers ventures to report it; and as it can be understood by very few of the listeners, there cannot be above one or two oral copies in existence.

After Israel has journeyed quietly through the desert of the Sergeant's eloquence, a petition comes for the abolition of the Corn Laws; and the country gentlemen declare their readiness to acquiesce in the prayer of the petition, provided a new monopoly is to be granted, of which the little finger shall be heavier upon the national industry than the loins of the old one. To the Corn Laws succeeds a whole list of Private Bills for the draining of millponds, the setting up of turnpike-gates, and the farther securing of abundant and wholesome dinners to Justices of the Peace and Churchwardens of Parishes, throughout England and the principality of Wales. These meet with no opposition, except from two members, one of whom is, upon examination, found to have been struck off the roll of the Quorum, and another rejected by a select vestry. Joseph Hume, who has been all this while smoothing the dog's-ears from a well-used copy of the Ready Reckoner, rises to move for twenty or thirty returns, all of which, except a return of the silent members of the House, for

which he is called to order, as being a breach of privilege, are granted; and Joseph sits down with as solid an air of self-satisfaction as though he had disproved the circulation of the blood as a doctor, confuted the whole Senatus of Aberdeen College as a casuist, superseded the Chairman as an East-India proprietor, or discovered the philosopher's stone as a private adventurer.

The great leaders for the evening not having yet joined their forces, the business lingers for a little; and Mr. Richard Martin, of Galway, introduces the victim-cattle, which are adorned for the sacrifice with bunches of ribbons from Mr. Peter Moore, the appropriate Member for Coventry.

It may happen that, in the course of those minor weapon-showings, which precede and prepare for the great battle of the night, you may be treated with that singular movement called a division of the House, — an operation which, as spectators are bundled out at one door of the Gallery before it begins, and received in by another after it is over, gives strangers like yourself an advantage over more practised or more favoured people. For the convenience of counting those who are for and those who are against the motion to be decided, the one party goes out of the House and the other remains in. If it be the first introduction of any measure upon which the division

takes place, then those who advocate that measure withdraw from the House, or, as it is technically termed, "the *ayes* go out;" but if the measure be in the House, that is, if it have passed one stage, then "the *noes* go out." Upon this and some other practices the following rhymes have been composed:

THE FIVE SENSES OF ST. STEPHEN'S.

Do you doubt the pretence of the Commons to *sense?*
Why, they 've got *all the five* in perfection:
In *tasting* and *feeling* they still will be dealing,
When fate brings about an election:

And then as to *ears*, their thundering "hear! hears!"
Show not Balaam's instructor had longer;
While, for *sight* and for *smell*, their practices tell
No eagle or hound has them stronger.

When, through thick and through thin, they bring matters in,
They knowingly put out their *ayes;*
When what 's in they oppose, they poke out their *noes:*
Which is strictly impartial and wise.

But, notwithstanding those slight matters, and notwithstanding the high expectations into which you had been worked by the fame of the House before you took your journey, and the difficulty of getting admission to it after you arrived, you are apt to become a little restive, and cannot altogether

keep down the suspicion that the reeds of the instruments behind you have more to do in forming the din into soul-stirring harmony, than the mouths from which it is blown in front. The sages in the body of the House, indeed, with their endless variety of countenance, and their motley diversity of costume,—some sitting as prim and immovable, as if a heavy hammerman of Babylon had done them into stone; others capped, jacketed, booted, spurred, and, if not whipped, at least whip-armed, put you in mind of jockeys gaping and yawning for their beef and their bowl after the fatigues of a chace or the follies of a horse-race; and others again, having that sort of solemnity which beams forth in the sages of your vestry, when they meet to settle the important point, whether his Reverence shall first draw the tithes of turnips or of potatoes.

You must not, however, allow yourself to be deceived by unpromising appearances at the beginning. It belongs to all nature, and to all art, that that which is elevated shall sink down, and that which is lowly shall arise. The *débris* of the lofty mountains elevates and fattens the valleys between them; the abrasion of the boldest shores—and they are ever the first to be abraded, furnishes materials for the manufacture of new land in the most lowly bed of the ocean; the high spirit and proud purse of the heedless lord succumb and sink, in or-

der to raise up the wily Jew; the men of high birth and of high principle had wont at least to roll away from the Court, in order to make room and glory for the smooth flatterer and the sticking parasite; the man of genius lies down in the dust, in order that the dunce may stand erect upon his grave; and

> "As beards, the nearer that they tend
> To the earth, still grow more reverend;
> And cannons shoot the higher pitches,
> The lower we let down their breeches;"—

so this unpromising appearance of matters in the House is the most certain evidence that something of no common sound and fury is in the wind. If you had been to witness a mere common-place wrangle, you would long ere now have had the small tilting of the little men; and the voices of Wynn, and Wood, and Rice, and Ellice, and Palmer, and Martin, *et hoc genus omne*, would have been stunning and terrifying the legitimate sense and the legitimate sound of the English tongue, into the holes of the wall, and the chinks of the wainscot: in a moment of preparation like this, however, "fear holds them mute," with the exception of the interminable and incomprehensible Joseph Hume, who, "alone untaught to fear," is continually "about it, goddess, and about it," reducing his vulgar fractions to a common denominator.

It comes; and as the tempest gives the first sig-

nal of its approach, by the binding and whistling of reeds, and the twittering of leaves upon the aspen-tree, the first idea that you catch of the coming majesty of the House, is in muttered growls and curses from the labouring men in the rear of the Gallery, and the cowering and crouching of the chickens of party upon either side, in order that they may find stay and shelter beneath the wings of their leaders: Sir James Mackintosh enters the House, and moves towards the middle of the Opposition bench, where Lord Archibald Hamilton had been doing the incubation of warming goose upon the seat, while the Knight had been helping a gifted member of the Upper House to destroy the memory of the speech-securing bottles. Sir James moves along, hemming as he moves, as though the passage for his words were as difficult to be made, as General Wade found the military road in his native mountains of Stratherick; and he comes armed with documents, as though during that night he were to give to the wishing and waiting public that history of England, which seems, as it is anticipated to be all rich and lovely as a rainbow, to flit as that meteor flits before the anxious boy who pursues it with avidity, but pursues it in vain.

Having disposed such of his cargo as are to victual himself through the speech, by the side of the sounding-box, and distributed the others among

the crews who were to follow him, he rises with that slow majesty which indicates that the weight of times and of states is placed on his shoulders.—He beams a look of inspiration upon those in whom he puts confidence, frowns defiance against Copley and Wetherell, aims a nod of half-coaxing, half-threatening, at Canning, glances toward the Gallery, to see that all is ready for preserving even the smallest fragment of that intellectual feast which he is about to prepare, and then he begins. His first sentences are so low and so croaking, and his bearing and expression have so little of elegance or of fire about them, that you wonder at the length of ears that is stretched out to catch the sound; but, as he proceeds, his sentences stretch out in breadth, and swell up in sound, till notwithstanding the oratorical care with which they are modelled, you fancy that your whole apparatus of hearing is to be battered to pieces, in order that the oration may at once, and without opposition, charge its way to the inmost recesses of your understanding. Your ears shiver as though the whole House were filled with tinmen and braziers, all vigorously at work; and your teeth are set on edge, as though opposing men and opposing sentiments were not to be beaten by argument, but mown down by countless scythes, which were at that moment undergoing the process of sharpening.

The learned gentleman shows such an intimate acquaintance with English law, and so ardent a love for the broad and general principles of liberty, that you wonder why he has not completed his History of England, or been more active in the real furtherance of that about which he can declaim in so measured language, and so unmeasurable voice. If you have power remaining to think at all, you cannot help thinking that there is, in all this, a purpose, or a want of purpose, which is not confessed. Nor are you long in finding that all this illustration from history, and all this warmth from principle, are auxiliary to a more congenial object of the orator. All is a mere beating of the bushes, till the scent of a quotation is found; and when that is the case, off he scampers full speed, bounding over every hedge of the question, coursing all the field of declamation, and never stopping, till a score of lines from *Cicero de Republicâ* be fairly worried, and the brush displayed in his cap. During the chase, Canning takes up a newspaper, and Huskisson's finger slides over the items of an estimate; while the junior members on both sides stare with astonishment, and some of the country gentlemen fall asleep. Chase is however taken after chase, figure after figure cleared, and quotation after quotation run down; and at each brush that is displayed to the wonderers, a roll of cheer-

ing ensues. These rolls of cheering form one of the three estates of applause, by which Englishmen, when heated, show their approbation. In theatres, which are supposed not to take any particular hold on the understanding, or indeed in any way to affect the head, the hands, and more especially the feet, are the organs of approbation; and the gaping auditor kicks off his delight by battering the boards with his heels. At taverns, where the sources of gratification are held as being partly rational and partly animal, demonstration is made by bawling till the air vibrate, and thumping the table till the glasses reel again. In the House of Commons, the exhibition of which may be accounted the feast of reason—the plum-pudding, *par excellence*, of English enjoyment, the thing is done by reiterating the word "Hear!" till all power of hearing be utterly at an end, and the organs of hearing be all but destroyed. It begins with distinct and pattering "Hear! hear!" but those syllables roll, and rumble, and jostle each other, till it resembles the emptying of small stones out of a cart, or the chafe of pebbles on a beach, rolling after a returning billow, more nearly than it does the sound of any thing human. At last it fades away. You find a few lagging "Hears!" dribbled out, like the lagging shots of frightened volunteers, after the roll of a *feu-de-joie* on a birth-

day, or the last drawled minim of some ancient dame in a Methodist chapel, whose inclination to sleep has spun her psalmody to more than usual length: and looking about you, you discover that the last and laziest ones come from two recumbent representatives in the side gallery to your right, who went there to dose till they should have occasion to cheer the Ministerial side of the House; but who, awakened by the din, and fearful that they might have overslept themselves, throw in a few random notes to swell the fugue, and then finding their mistake, and blushing thereat, again address themselves to sleep, and leave the "Hears!" to those who are more intent upon hearing.

At the first of these demonstrations of Parliamentary approbation, you are very apt to be seized with utter amazement,—to look, if you have the power of looking, for the grim ghost of Cromwell, with its accompaniment of jacks and halberds, come again to clutch at the mace, and disperse "the Wisdom" to seek the Lord elsewhere,—or to ask, if you have collectedness left for asking, whether there has been any new Guy Fawkes a rat-catching with his lantern in the cellarage under the House. But as it passes on without any flight on the part of the members, you are reconciled to it by degrees,—nor, if you be not all the more stupid, is it long before you learn to know, from the sig-

nal-look of the speaker, and his signal-thump upon the box, when, and to what extent, this hammering of others is to clench the nails of his argumentation. If, indeed, your first experience of this unseemly practice, (for though it be a Parliamentary practice, and for that reason liberal, constitutional, and wise—qualities which are, or at least ought to be, predicable of every thing Parliamentary, it is nevertheless unseemly,) shall happen to be at the end of a brilliant speech, and when "other cattle," as Richard Martin, Esq. hath it in his speech or Bill, I forget which, are to keep the House going, till the *whistles* have been again wetted in Bellamy's coffee-house, then you have some apprehension that Guy Fawkes is in the rat-hole, hammering his flint in good earnest; for there is such a tumbling out, both of the House and Gallery, and the Speaker appears so fidgetty in his chair, that you find yourself escaping by mere instinct, before you are aware, and do not return until you have been assured by the door-keepers that not a rat is in jeopardy.

In this manner, Sir James and the House work their way through sundry hours of eloquence by "Shrewsbury clock;" and, in as far as eloquence is concerned, leaving out sweetness of tone, and it may be firmness of purpose, the display is not a bad one. Sir James is indeed a master-builder;

and though the pyramids which he erects be not all of the same size, or arranged in the lines that you would most approve of, they are individually formed according to the legitimate rules of the profession, and the gilded quotation which glitters upon the top of each, is so placed, as not only to be seen from every direction, but to be predicted from the very founding of that upon which it rests.

That Sir James Mackintosh is a person of great natural powers, no man who knows any thing about him will deny; but it is equally true, that he has directed those powers more to the study of what is showy in theory, than of what is sound in philosophy or useful in practice. His mental tactics, though somewhat too artificial, are also good; but his voice and appearance are very much against him. His words, instead of flowing in that mellifluous strain, or swelling into those clear volumes of sound, which are essential to the proper effect of impassioned declamation such as that in which he deals, come grating from him, as if they were bruized out by millstones. His language, though always flowery, and often fine, is by much too rhetorical; and his manner is too artificial, and his expression too hard to be understood, for admitting of that sympathy with him, which another orator, delivering less elevated sentiments, in less classical language, would be able to command.

It might be mere fancy: but I never could bring myself to feel that those glowing and glorious sentences which I have heard Sir James utter, and which produced upon the House, both in intensity and duration, the influence of electric shocks, were in keeping with the look that accompanied them; for even when they were beaming and burning in the hottest and the happiest of their coruscations, the eye of the orator was cold. Still the sentiments themselves are good; and if they should not (and perhaps in that I am mistaken) warm the orator himself, they are the cause of warmth in others,—which is one of the best and most legitimate—I beg its pardon—*constitutional* uses of Parliamentary eloquence.

When eloquence and applause have won for the Knight that which he seems pre-eminently to desire, the motion is made, haply for some alteration of the criminal law,—put by the Speaker,—and, in order that no minor mass may disturb the collision of bullets from two great legal blunderbusses, it is seconded in a nod from John Cam Hobhouse; and forthwith Sir John Copley, his Majesty's Attorney-general, well skilled and well habited to understand both sides of the question and of the House, rises in cool self-possession, to obliterate with calm and clear logic the dints which the forky lightning of Sir James has made upon

that order of things which Sir John Copley has seen meet to espouse and to advocate.

Sir John Copley does not set your nerves on fire and stretch your imagination on the rack, like him of whose points he rises to dim the gloss; but Sir John Copley, nevertheless, grapples your understanding and lays hold of your conviction in a much more powerful manner than the other. He is a man not inferior in natural powers; and though his acquirements have not the glow and the sparkle of those of Sir James Mackintosh, they have fully more of matter in them. Like Sir James, he derives little advantage from his voice, which is as cold as ice, and as inflexible as a brick-bat: it is wholly without inflexion; it rises not with a high subject, it sinks not down with a low one; it becomes not slow when he is solemn, and it hurries not along when he should be impassioned; it cannot even point the master-words of a sentence, or the master-sentences of a paragraph, with any emphasis of which an ordinary ear can take hold; and, upon the whole, if this solid and successful personage had nothing else upon which to depend, he would rank among the most inefficient even of the long-winded men of briefs, who take their turn in twining out a lullaby to the rocking-cradle of legislation. But Sir John Copley, as you will instantly perceive, looks a person who not

only has stuff in him, but who knows to turn that stuff to proper account: his language, though plain, is remarkable both for its neatness and for the nicety with which it is adapted to the object in view; his manner, though void of every thing like flourish, has a great deal of force in it; and his look and expression are very acute and shrewd. Nor is the strain of his speaking at all at-variance with these: he displays great judgment both in the selection and the application of his arguments; and one seldom meets with a clearer logician, or a closer reasoner,—at least in any two propositions, or two steps in the establishment of one proposition, that are immediately consecutive: for if you attend closely to him, the chance is that you will assent to every part of the speech as you go along; but if, when it is over, you compare the two ends of it together, you will be at a loss to comprehend what delicacy of doubling in a course so apparently straight-forward and clear, should have enabled him from such premises to arrive at such a conclusion. You know, or at least you suspect, that there must be some lurking sophistry—some nicely-concealed paralogism, in that chain of reasoning which to you seems to flow in so uniform and orderly a manner; but before you can discover the sophistry, and expose the paralogism, you would require to be as much a master of the art of little deflections quietly

made, as the very able, and apparently very straight forward Attorney-general. You never find that the sum of those deflections is such as very much to offend you; but when he concludes, you are provoked at your own inability to find them out by the way. The impression left on your mind is one of high respect for the talents of the man, and not a very inordinate desire, even although you may differ from him, to quarrel with the politician. You feel convinced, that if you had a case which required just a very little twist in the working to make it answer the end you have in view, there is no person to whom you would sooner intrust it than Sir John Copley.

The "gong-peal and cymbal-clank" of the opening oration had rent the air like a sail in a storm, or a banner in a battle, and awakened and frightened the rats to the foundations and unseen fastnesses of the Chapel; and the speech of the first objector to the motion has flowed in so uniform a strain, albeit nothing like "the dulcet sounds of flutes and soft recorders," that it has rendered the atmosphere of the House calm again, and brought the murine tenants, not only to a sense of safety in their places, but it may be to something like a consciousness of fraternity, or at least of friendship; and when those opposing powers have tried the balance and flung it by, various candidates offer

themselves for the honour of the sequence. Of these, the figure of Denman first, as they say in the House, "catches the eye of the Speaker;" or, as you would say out of it, "the eye of the Speaker catches the figure of Denman;" and the Wynnes, the Wetherells, the Lambs, and the Lockharts, drop down upon their respective benches, like humming-birds upon the discharge of a blunderbuss loaded with sand.

Mr. Denman rises with as much cold gravity, as if old Father Thames reared his head above the massy waters, rich with all the votive offerings of his thousand worshippers, and gives you the depth of a bassoon solo. His expression is absolutely sepulchral, and his voice sounds as if it came hollow from the tombs at midnight's blackest hour. His natural powers do not strike you as being of the very first order, and his acquirements are of the breadth rather than the depth of things. You instinctively admit, that nothing can be in finer congruity than his appointment to an office under the Babylonian Corporation: for he has all the solid and substantial qualities of every thing which belongs to that Corporation; and, would he take his illustrations directly from the state barge and coach, the installation dinners, the Guildhall statues, or even Gog and Magog themselves, the keeping would be perfect. The progress of his logic

is sure, but it is *peristaltic*, and propagated from one end of the subject to the other, like the twistings of a well-fed eel, when it works its way upon a tour of pleasure, from side to side of a citizen's pond. The grave manner, the rhetorical language, and the ponderous and verbose style in which Mr. Denman delivers himself, taken in combination with the stately gloom of his visage, make you believe that something of wondrous weight is to come at the close; but you wait and wait, and at last find that, though the arguments which he uses be very fair in themselves, and not badly joined together, yet that they are so obese with mere words, that you cannot easily discover either a bone or articulation. You must not, however, be displeased at this; for among orators, as among oysters, the largest shell seldom contains the most racy kernel.

The oratory of Mr. Denman is a signal to the Irish and the country gentlemen, that now is the time for them to get into *port*, and victual for the storm that yet awaits them. So they bundle off for Bellamy's coffee-house, and there, by beefsteaks and bumpers of the best, and jokes of the other kind, they become more expressly the representatives of their constituents, than if, like Mr. Peter Moore, and Mr. Fyssche Palmer, they hung, like two cold and pale moons,

upon the stilly but meanwhile starless concavity of the House. It is more than probable, that you may feel a disposition to follow the multitude; and, I can assure you, you may do worse. Bellamy, I believe, gets his license through the Speaker; and, if the Speaker also choose the wines, the choice does him no discredit whatever. But good wine can be had any where; and, as there is not much charm in the coffee-house eloquence of M.P.s, you find your way back to enjoy a new chapter of the House.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE HOUSE OF COMMONS γ.

A field-day, like a wasp or fiddle,
Is always slender at the middle;
And if adjourned, it closes stringless
Like fiddle's half, or half-wasp stingless.

RHYMES OF THE REPORTERS.

THE deep-mouthed call of the Common Serjeant to the Corporation of Babylon the Great is answered by the "learned Lord," from "the Modern Athens"—his Majesty's advocate for his Majesty's interest, prince of all the Dogberries, grand inquisitor into all crimes, and Crown reporter in all official story-telling, for the provinces, and those who dwell therein, poleward of the Tweed, and member of Parliament for the ghosts of five departed Burghs in the kingdom of Fife, "to boot and boot." Those boroughs have always been well and truly represented; but never, except in the case of the present learned Lord *ex officio*, and wise Baronet *ex gratiâ*, have they been more so

than in the case of Umquhill Sir John Anstruther of that ilk Baronet, who, after a war of semi-Trojan duration, came down upon them with banners flying, and bearing the inscription—"*Perissim nisi perissim*"—which being interpreted, signified, "You have attempted to *dish* me, and therefore I shall *dish* you." That important personage was remarkable for the exercise of three patriotic and personal virtues,—politics, coal-pits, and sleep. The politics, as being altogether beyond his depth, he intrusted implicitly to the Administration for the then time being; the coal-pits, being deep matters also, he intrusted to a very profound personage of the name of Gawin Hogg; and the sleep, as being the most gentle of the three, he contrived to manage in his own person. This had been his practice for many years previous to his representing the five ghosts in St. Stephen's, and as before that great event he had come as near to that great epoch of discretion, as it is given such personages to come, he very prudently adhered to it afterwards. A field-day of those times had come round; Sir John had seen the muster-rolls, and listened to the opening cannonade: after this, he had poured out his drink-offering at Bellamy's during the discharge of the small arms; and as his rest there was disturbed by sundry little men who were filling themselves to the speaking point, he went into the

side Gallery, and was soon made happy through the composing lullaby of the third-bench men of the day. So generous had been the drink-offering, and so balmy and profound was the sleep, that the thunders of the last charge could no more awaken the Baronet, than the thunders of the battle-field can awaken the slain; and so when the House came to "put out their ayes," of which Sir John was known to be one, although closed in sleep in the mean time, he still lay motionless as the bench itself, amusing his dreams with the vocal performance of his own olfactory apparatus. When the last waking "aye" of the House was in the act of being put out, a messenger was dispatched to rouse the Baronet to the performance of his voting.—After a few hearty shakings, he arose, looked bewildered, and asked what was the matter. "Your vote, Sir John! your vote!" said the messenger. "*My* vote! what needs ye fash me about a vote, when ye hae Gawin Hogg? Canna ye spier at Gawin, and be hanged to you, and let me tak my rest!"

I will not take upon me to decide whether the ghosts of the five Burghs aforesaid, be better or worse represented in the Sir William, whom I heard as responder to the Common Serjeant, than they were in the Sir John of whom the above anecdote is almost the sole Parliamentary remain; but

I must say, that if your mind be constructed in any way like mine, the learned Lord will pour such a flood of doubtings upon you, or rather be the cause of your pouring such a flood of doubtings upon yourself, as will induce you to lose sight of the five Burghs altogether, and imagine that that which, "in such a questionable shape" as Hamlet says, stands and speaks before you, is neither more nor less than the representative of the ghost of David Hume. You doubt, first of all, whether an officer having such civil, political, and criminal powers, as this same Lord Advocate is vested with in Scotland, ought to be a member of the House of Commons at all. Again you doubt whether, admitting the perfect congruity of the two offices,—namely, that he who, when in Scotland, represents the King, can and will, when in England, represent the people,—whether this same learned Baronet be equal to the discharge of the two offices jointly, or even the one of them singly. Yet, again, you doubt whether there be not, on the part of the English officers and lawyers of the Crown, a feeling toward the Scottish Lord, which all the penetration that you can muster is not able to translate or twist into a maximum of admiration. Moreover, you doubt whether the learned Lord will be able to grope to the bottom of the Common Serjeant's dark arguments. Furthermore, you doubt whe-

ther it would not be just as well for him to follow the example of Sir John. And finally, you doubt whether, before the conclusion of his holding forth, the ever wakeful eyes of the Speaker himself shall not be sealed in soft slumber.

Having such a broad base of doubting on which to rest, you cannot be certain that you are right in any one trait of the public character of this learned personage. It will strike you that his powers are feeble, and that, however much he may be skilled in the law and practice of Scotch official politics, he neither can understand, nor has studied, those large and liberal principles, which make England the most delightful of lands and Englishmen the most commanding of orators. His Lordship, indeed, bears himself as if he knew them all; but his appearance is dull and clumsy, his style disjointed, his language feeble, and his voice, though it sounds of the horn, and occasionally of the crooked horn, has assuredly no relationship to the "mellow horn," which Collins has immortalized in song; and therefore no "bubbling runnel" of applause, even from the Treasury benches, except half a "Hear!" from Sir George Clerk, or three quarters from Lord Binning, cheers the lonely speaker on his tedious way,—a way which, at its termination, glides into the misty oblivion of a *non sequitur*, in a style which, if you understand, you are not only

wiser than I am, but wiser than the Lord Advocate of Scotland.

As the progress of his Lordship's speech has succeeded in clearing the House of three-fourths of its members, you find that the close of it has nearly deprived all who remain of power of speech,—the only person who rises to reply being Lord Archibald Hamilton, and the probable cause of his rising is, that being deaf, or at least very dull of hearing, the tranquillizing power of the speech has had the less effect upon him. Lord Archibald is a very plain man: his bearing is honest and mild, but his voice is perfectly tuneless; and, as he is unable to hear distinctly what is said on the opposite side, he is very apt to answer that which no man has asserted, and to assert that which no man will take the trouble of answering. When he replies to the Lord Advocate, you do not regret those qualities, because it matters little what the reply shall be; but when you find the state of the Scottish Representation to be such, as that questions connected with the most vital interests of that end of the Island have to be confided to the almost unassisted powers of Lord Archibald, shame comes over you on account of the representation, and pity on account of the people.

The last pair of speakers whom you have heard have succeeded in separating the debate from the

question, and in taking off that interest which you were disposed to feel at the beginning; and thus you are enabled to enter into a formal estimate of the general talents of those who present themselves to the Speaker's notice, rather than a detached judgment upon their ability and conduct in respect of the question more immediately before the House. For a little they had followed in some sort of train, balancing each other as if by a conventional agreement; but now there is neither principle nor order in the sequence, and thus you feel disposed to contemplate them much in the same way that you would a gallery of portraits which had been arranged and hung up according to the mere caprice of the artist.

Mr. Wynn is one who, out of this mass, forces himself upon you—not so much by the peculiarity of what he says, as by the odd way in which he puts himself forward to say it. Mr. Wynn rises from the bench, advances his right foot half a pace, throws back his head till the facial line makes exactly half a right angle with the ceiling, and looks round the House as though he would not exchange his opinion of himself—no, "not for Cadwallader and all his goats," and squeaks away in a voice as high in the gamut as he is in his own self-approbation. Mr. Wynn is neither a logician nor an orator,—he cannot argue, and he cannot declaim:

his words, too, are feeble; they are put together in the most confused way imaginable; and the whole mass of qualities, ghostly and bodily, which he puts in motion, grate painfully upon the ear. Mr. Wynn, however, has his sphere; and it is not without a feeling that he deserves it, that he has taken up that comfortable opinion of himself which consoles him for the want of that admiration which he does not command in the House. Mr. Wynn is an adept in the only science—if science it may be called, which is truly and exclusively Parliamentary,—he knows what is order and what is not—when a Member may, with impunity, state that which is doubtful both in substance and in form, and when the visitation of the Sergeant-at-Arms is in danger of alighting upon one who states that, the abstract truth of which nobody can feel a very great disposition to gainsay. In this way he is at times exceedingly useful; and there is no doubt that he, and a few others who follow, but are not equal to him in this mystery of manners, have prevented many a two-handed debate, the violence of which could not be quelled by the loudest canon in the House, from finding its quietus, with tremblings and triggers, upon those more doubtful fields, where fools demonstrate the worthlessness of their brains by staking the chance of their being blown out against an idle word.

There are no two members of the House of Commons with whom you are apt to be more disappointed than Mr. Hobhouse, the member for Westminster, and Sir Robert Wilson, the member for Southwark. So much noise has been made about those two persons; and the one has gotten himself so much renown as a peripatetic scholar, and the other as a peripatetic soldier; that you are apt to come prepared to behold Mr. Hobhouse conquering St. Stephen's by the immediate inspirations of Mercury, and Sir Robert subduing it by the aid of Mars: but those two champions of popular election, instead of conquering the House of Commons, are hardly able to conquer a third-rate question, or even to triumph over their own tempers. If one were to give the character of Mr. Hobhouse in a few words, one would describe him as a caviller,—a caviller, too, not upon broad grounds or comprehensive views of a subject, but upon little matters in corners. His manner is very much against him: it is pert and forward; and he roars out his little exception to some little point, as if he were settling the affairs of all the world. His voice is loud even to roaring, but it is harsh and unmusical; while his language, though strong and inflated, is so coarse—laid so near to the language of the hustings, that it alone would be a great bar in the way of his ever having much influence, either

in the House of Commons or out of it,—unless, indeed, when a troubled state of the waters of society happen to cast up to the surface things which had better remain at the bottom. While listening to him, it is impossible for you to keep out of your mind the thought of a gift which the goddess of the Dunciad bestowed upon one of her former legitimate sons,—

> "To cavil, judge, and censure, right or wrong,—
> Full and eternal privilege of tongue."

But notwithstanding all this sound and fury of the younger glory of Westminster; notwithstanding the bold front with which he puts himself forward; notwithstanding the zeal with which, upon his election, he was puffed and pamphleted all over the country; notwithstanding the variety and the readiness of his scholarship; notwithstanding a certain restless activity of disposition and a certain microscopic eye in politics, which enable him to find and to fix upon flaws and frailties which greater men are but too apt to overlook; and notwithstanding what ought, perhaps, to give him greater weight than all those,—his being, by report at least, the political pupil and protégé of Sir Francis Burdett—the foremost of England's politicians in eloquence, in hardihood, in inflexibility, and in free-born strength,—all his sound, all his fury, all his pertness, all his captiousness—ay,

and all his better qualities, (of which, if he would put them forward as prominently as he does the less agreeable ones, he is by no means deficient,) count for very little: and perhaps there is not a man within the walls of St. Stephen's, who throws so many things really smart, and meant to be pointed, into the lumber-house of its neglect. During the time that he has been a member in that House, if all the unparried attacks, all the disregarded sarcasms, all the unexposed assertions, and all the unadmired furies of speech, were to be collected and restored to their rightful owners, there is no member that would come in for a larger share than John Cam Hobhouse. But John Cam Hobhouse is a good scholar certainly; he is abundantly liberal in his politics, he represents one of the largest bodies (I say *bodies*) of electors any where to be met with in the country, and he by no means hides either his light, or the candlestick from which that light glimmers forth, under the bushel either of natural or affected modesty; and yet, notwithstanding all those advantages, he is, and must remain, a member of inferior weight and value.

Sir Robert Wilson does not possess the same advantages as to scholastic cultivation, that are possessed by the member for Westminster; and his natural powers are, to say the best of them, not of

a high order. Sir Robert also wants that quality of the other orator, which Butler says gives a man great pretence to all things. His expression is peevish and querulous; and though his manner be abundantly violent, there is something in it which prevents its ever being effective. His voice, though shrill enough, is hard and wiry, and there is a vague and sketchy texture running through the whole of what he says. When you look at Sir Robert Wilson, you can never doubt for a moment that he is perfectly sincere in every thing that he utters: a glance will convince you that he is an enthusiast, but that he belongs to that class of enthusiasts who are unable to exercise much judgment in adopting the subject of their enthusiasm, or to display much hardihood in abiding by it. Sir Robert Wilson is one of those creations of troublesome times, which, had the nations remained tranquil, would have been a very good, but a very common-place member of common society.

Through a succession of such orators, and such eloquence as those and that, the House and the hearers ebb away, wave after wave, and drop after drop, till little remains under the still moon-beam of the Speaker, save such *buccinæ* as Mr. Peter Moore and the Hon. Henry Grey Bennet, and that eternal barnacle of the benches, Joseph Hume. It is the nature of all tides, however, that those

which ebb farthest, and expose the most dry and shallow banks, return with the greatest rapidity, roar in the most angry foam, and rise to the greatest height. The first signal of the return—and it is but a signal, is the rising of the learned Dr. Lushington, who comes upon the House with the special pleading of a consistorial case, and looks so solemn, and so proof against all change of tone and of temperature, that, instead of a very able pleader before the Court of Arches, you would almost fancy that he is the abutment of a physical arch. The Doctor's manner is lead itself—dull enough in all conscience, but so cold withal, that under its influence you cannot sleep. His voice, is harsh, his language dry and technical, and his style so exceedingly tedious that even the dullest hearer is unable to lose pace with it: still there is a redeeming sincerity about the Doctor; and if he could give up about ninety-seven words out of every hundred, what he says, especially upon professional subjects, would have a considerable effect, and would deserve to have it. Persons of small effective power should be very careful how they encumber that power by extraneous matters: an ounce of lead, if sent forth of a musket naked, will cleave a deal board at the distance of two hundred yards; but place it in the centre of a ton of goose-feathers, and an equal force would not make it

break a cobweb at the distance of twenty feet. It is somewhat after this fashion, that the laborious words of Dr. Lushington, and speakers of his profession and calibre, come between the understandings of them that hear and the sense of that which is spoken—

> "Like feather bed between a wall,
> And heavy brunt of cannon ball."

While the Doctor's oration leaves you for a good while in doubt, whether the House is to ebb away to final dryness or to return in a returning swell, that doubt begins by degrees to be cleared up: members, one by one, re-occupy their places; the recorders shake off their sleep, and sharpen their pens and pencils; the slumberers in the side Galleries turn themselves over; and when those indications have increased for a little, the tenth wave of wisdom rolls inward about the tenth hour, and Brougham, Canning, and the other buoyant and sparkling substances, are borne in on the top of the tide.

When the learned gentleman has wearied himself to a close, another gentleman, not less learned, but the very reverse of this one in all the substance and all the attributes of public speaking, flings himself upon the rising flow of the House. Mr. Plunkett is a man of very considerable talents, and he has not neglected their cultivation. His aspect,

too, after the solidity that has just passed, is like a flash of Heaven's fire from forth of a dark cloud. He is not an elegant man, neither does he strike you as being a profound one. When he speaks, you do not feel your heart warming as at a Burdett, your belief in human nature kindling as at a Canning, your love of human integrity strengthening as at a Robinson, or your dread of human power shaking you as at a Brougham,—you have none of those feelings; and you do not lean forward to drink instruction as you would do from Huskisson, or sit rivetted and still as to Wilberforce—to a song of delight by one "who hath a pleasant voice, or playeth cunningly upon an instrument;" but still you are forced to listen, compelled to wonder, and, when the arrowy speed of the orator will let you, you are constrained to admire. As old Katerfelto said, "it is not de lightning, it is not de dunder," but it is a pelting of as hard and as hurried hail-stones as ever were made to rattle upon the outside or the inside of a house. For an Irishman, Mr. Plunkett has wonderful command of himself; and though you could not for one moment mistake which is the land that honours and is honoured by him, you do not in him meet with any of those *Crom a boos* which rouse men to moral or to mental rapine, or any of those *Ululoos* over the damage that has been done, which are sung, and

sung with somewhat of truth, as being characteristic of the genuine speakers of that land of impassioned hearts and more impassioned elocution.—Plunkett has a great deal of judgment; and though his speech be rather too curt and snappish for a musical ear, he speaks orderly and well: and if it were not that the intense hardness of the small individual masses prevents their aggregation into one whole, Mr. Plunkett would, if not the greatest, be the keenest master of invective in the House. He is a very acute logician, but he is not always an accurate one; yet he hurries on from one proposition to another, with such impetuosity and such bounds, that he succeeds in clearing those fissures and gullies in which an orator of less buoyancy would be sure to drop—probably to rise no more.

When Plunkett has trundled his gemmy drops for the requisite period of time, both the House and the Gallery let you know what is coming next. There sits upon the first bench on the Speaker's left, a figure which seems as though it had hung over the lamp of study, till not all the bloom of life merely, but even the energy of life itself, had been on the very verge of extinction; and yet, upon this apparently helpless figure the whole eyes of the House are turned, and its first mechanical and automaton-like effort at rising calls forth a muttered curse from the quill-men in your rear, while

every crany of the Gallery becomes wedged like the arch-stones of a vault, and pressed by an immense load at each superincumbent portal. The House beneath seems to partake of the kindling interests for that which, to a stranger like you, promises any thing but gratification; for during the time that the figure is slowly uncoiling itself to something like a verticle curve, or rather like a verticle zigzag of stifly-jointed lines, half-a-dozen of heedless zealots upon both sides, who had attempted to interpose their sounding sconces, drop down as if the Speaker had an air-gun concealed under his robe.

After this bustle of preparation, and amid the breathless silence which follows it, Henry Brougham takes a slow and hesitating pace towards the table, where he stands crouched together—his shoulders pulled up, his head bent forward, and his upper lip and nostril agitated by a tremulous motion, as though he were afraid to utter even a single sentence. His air and manner are very much those of a field-preacher—not such as draw the idle holiday crowds of modern times, but them of old, by whom the purity of religion was preserved and propagated in the wilderness, when it had been banished from the city, and even from the church: the tones of his voice are full and melodious; but they come forth slow, hesitating, and, as it strikes you, with

pain—so that you are left in doubt whether the intellectual power of the man be unable to master the subject, or his physical strength to give it utterance. His first sentences, or rather the first members of his sentence, for you soon find that with him a sentence is more extended, both in form and in substance, than the whole oration of many other men, come forth cold and irresolute, and withal so wide of the question, that you are unable to perceive how they shall be bent so as to bear upon it. Each of them is, indeed, profound, clear, and satisfactory in itself, evidently deduced by the most chosen art from the choicest materials; and, come they from what title of the wide Encyclopædia they will, the very essence of them is given, and most satisfactorily given, in those words. There seems to be some one direction in which they are all bent, and bent by a mighty power; but that power is as yet viewless as the wind, and, like the spirit, 'you cannot tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth.'

When, however, a sufficient number of those propositions have been enunciated, and the enunciation is always such as to carry the demonstration with it,—when every auxiliary that the range of human knowledge can furnish for the firm establishment of the ultimate conclusion has been pressed into the service,—when every objection to

its force has been effectually turned aside by a single touch,—when the whole array of political and moral truth has been put in order; it moves on toward the conclusion, firm as the Macedonian phalanx, and irresistible as a bayonet-charge of the mountaineers of the North.

One position being thus carried with the appearance of weakness and want of resolution, but with a reality of power and of determination, which make themselves to be felt in the certainty with which it commands your assent, the orator rises upon it both in body and in mind, and wins a second by a more bold and brief attack. To a second succeeds a third; to a third a fourth; and so on, till the whole principles and the whole philosophy of the question have acknowledged their conqueror—till every man within the House, who has ears to hear and a heart to understand, be as irresistibly convinced of the abstract truth as he is of his own existence; so that if Brougham were to pause even here, he would be entitled to take his station as the foremost master of reason within the Chapel of St. Stephen's. The resources of the man are really astonishing; and one would almost imagine that he had realised the ancient Scythian fable, by killing the foremost man in every department of knowledge, and possessing himself of all their intellectual inheritances. It matters not

what the subject is, however sublime or however common-place, however abstruse or however practical, Brougham knows it—and knows it completely. Others may rival, and one or two may excel him, in the external beauties of ancient learning; but there is no man more thoroughly imbued with the glorious and glowing philosophy, which constitutes the most precious gem in all those caskets which have been bequeathed to us by them of the ages long gone by. Brougham does not imitate the chaste and correct, though somewhat courtier-like, language of Tully; neither do his orations (though they be somewhat more after that fashion) take the express form of those of the Grecian orator; but he wants not for the closeness of Cicero's logic, nor for the terrible invective of the Greek. In addition to this, he turns the science of the day to more account than any other speaker in or out of the House of Commons; and, taking away their political bearing and their political value altogether, there are speeches of Brougham's which are admirable as lectures upon philosophy, upon literature, and upon the arts.

It is, however, utterly impossible for you to analyze his character while you are hearing him speak,—that alone, though one of the most gratifying, is one of the severest tasks that you can possibly undertake. When, as already mentioned, he has laid the foundation in the utmost extent of

philosophy, and the profoundest depth of reason,—when he has returned to it again, applying the line and the plummet, to see the erection is orderly, and feeling with the touch of a giant to ascertain that it is secure,—when he has bound the understandings of the House and the spectators in cords of argument which they are equally undisposed and unable to break,—he vaults upon the subdued bases, rises in figure and in tone, calls forth the passions from their inmost recesses, overtops and shakes the gaping Members and the echoing House. That voice, which was at first so low and so unpretending, now assumes the deafening roar and the determined swell of the ocean; that form which, at the beginning, seemed to be sinking under its own weight, now looks as if it were nerved with steel, strung with brass, and immortal and unchangeable as the truths which in his calmer mood he uttered; that countenance which aforetime bore the hue and the coldness of stone, is now animated at every point and beaming in every feature, as though the mighty utterance were all inadequate to the mightier spirit within; and those eyes, which, when he began, turned their blue and tranquil discs on you, as if supplicating your forbearance and your pardon, now shoot forth their meteor fires, till every one upon whom they beam be kindled into admiration, and men of all

parties wish in their hearts that Brougham were "one of us." So concludes the second—the impassioned or declamatory part of the speech.

When he has gained what you imagine to be the acmé of powerful speaking, when, giving not emphasis to his words by the sounding-box, as the manner of some is, but emphasis to that box by his words,—and when he appears to be looking round, as if to see and to sneer at the adoration which he has commanded, his figure sinks down and re-coils itself, and his voice falls to the most extraordinary whisper that ever was uttered by man. This singular cadence, or rather dropping down, of expression, of action, and of voice, which Brougham possesses in greater perfection than any speaker that I ever heard, has a wonderful effect; and those low, solemn, and muttered words, which are yet perfectly audible, even to the whisper of a syllable, have a power in them that you cannot resist, even although you may be hearing them for the first time, and be for that reason ignorant of the object and the result. It is not by any means that either the speaker or the speech is exhausted. Those simple looks, and those subdued tones, are intended to usher in any thing but a peroration of flattery to his opponents, as though the orator were conscious that he had gone too far. Be assured that that crouching together of the body is

no symptom of weakness, and that falling of the voice is no prelude either to fear or to humility: it is the bending of the wrestler, in order that he may twine his antagonist more irresistibly in his grasp,—the crouching back of the tiger, in order that he may pounce with more terrible certainty on his prey,—it is the signal that Brougham is putting on his whole armour, and about to grasp the mightiest of his weapons. In his argument he has been clear and convincing; in his appeal to the passions, though somewhat haughty and hard, he has been successful; but he is now about to set his last and superhuman shaft upon the string—he is to become dreadful in his invective. Woe be to the man upon whom that eye—erewhile so calm and so blue—glares from the mysterious concealment of those puckered brows! Woe be to the wight to whom those half-whispered words are a presage of what is on the wing!

'You are a stranger, and of course you know not what is to happen: you merely see a man, who has convinced you by his arguments and warmed you by his appeal, bring the whole, as you suppose, to a most "lame and impotent conclusion," in those singularly-audible whispers. If, however, you were familiar with the House, and happened to be so seated as that you could command a view of all its members, you would be at

no loss to perceive that they did not all feel that that conclusion would be as lame and impotent as it appeared to you. You would find more than one, whom party or presumption had cast upon that sea of troubles without the needful ballast or the necessary rudder, looking about them with the same fearful and helpless apprehension, as a navigator in the Chinese sea, when he eyes the lurid calm in one point of the horizon, which tells him that, ere the minute-glass can be turned, the typhoon shall come in its gale of destruction from another,—you would perceive some small man grinning and twittering, as little birds do when within charming-distance of rattle-snakes—conscious of danger, yet deprived of even the means of self-protection, and courting destruction with the most piteous and frantic imbecility,—you would perceive a slender antagonist clutching the back of the bench with quivering talons, lest the coming tempest should sweep him away,—or you would see the portly and appropriate figure of the representative of the quorum of some fat county, delving both his fists into the cushion, fully resolved, that if a man of his weight should be blown out of the House, he would yet secure his seat by carrying it along with him.

It comes;—the words, which were so low and muttered, become so loud, that the speaker abso-

lutely drowns the cheering of his own party; and after he has peeled some helpless offender to the bone, and tossed about his mangled remains through all the modes and forms of speech, the body of the orator, being subdued and beaten down by the energy of his own mind—an energy which you can neither help feeling, nor succeed in describing—sinks down, giving the House leisure and breath to cheer, and leaving you utterly confounded.

At the termination of such a display as this, you would be apt to imagine that the business of the House would find at once its climax and its close,—that no man could be found who would be able to shake the reasonings, remove the impression, and heal the wounds that have been inflicted in the course of this display. But in this, as in many other of your anticipations respecting this unique and wonderful assembly, you are mistaken; for there is in the House power sufficient to gloss over or turn in a direction somewhat different, if not to answer, those arguments; others can stir the passions, though not so deeply, at least more delightfully; and others can cut, if not with so heavy a weapon, at least with one as keen and much more polished. George Canning—you would call him the Right Hon. George Canning, did he not make you feel that he is in himself something more

noble, more honourable, and more deserving to be honoured, than any thing which can descend by inheritance, be granted by patent, or conferred by office—has been listening all the while, not only as one who perfectly understood the speech, but as one who felt conscious of his own ability to reply to it. There is not a man living, whose appearance is calculated to put you in better humour with official men, with Parliamentary orators, with Englishmen, with mankind in general, or even (saving perchance a tinge of envy) with yourself, than this same amiable, elegant, eloquent, and as the event has proved, liberal and truly English Secretary. No man's appearance can be more prepossessing than that of Mr. Canning. You do not, indeed, at once give him your heart, as you do the Chancellor of the Exchequer—whose bearing is modesty, and whose look is candour itself; neither do you yield up your mind to him as you do to the calm, profound, and searching philosophy of Huskisson: but taking him upon the whole, as he looks and as he acts, whether as a man or as an orator, he is more agreeable, more delightful than they. Without having a single trace of pedantry, of foppery, or affectation about him, Mr. Canning has more of the real art of the orator than any man in the House. In the range of his powers, and in depth of knowledge, more especially on philosophical sub-

jects, he is inferior to Brougham; but in all those qualities which are calculated to dazzle and to win an enlightened audience, he is decidedly superior. Canning's head is about the finest that you can meet with. It does not, to be sure, indicate that depth or that power which are indicated by some others; but there is so much symmetry and grace, so perfect a balancing of all its faculties, and so total an absence of every thing harsh, or mean, or vulgar, that if he were not a very able man, the anticipation is so great that his speeches would appear to be fables. But his manner, and, generally speaking, his matter, are every way worthy of the Stanary (so to speak) of his eloquence. His voice is not so tremendously loud when elevated, neither can it sink into the curious under-tone which seems peculiar to Brougham; but it is deep and musical, and accords with his open and manly expression; and though his action be somewhat more theatrical than it would be safe for inferior men to undertake, yet no man knows better how to suit the action to the word. The language which Mr. Canning employs is exceedingly showy; and his style, though never tiresome, is very elaborate. One cannot pronounce that he is the most acute and close of logicians; but he is generally so clear, and always so specious, that one follows him with pleasure. But though he succeeds well in the establishment of his

own positions, his forte obviously lies in sacking and demolishing those ot his antagonists. He does this with a wit and a sprightliness which are truly Horatian; and when he lets loose the arrows of his wit against any personage, that personage must have previously got far into your esteem, if he do not, the while, appear an object of ridicule. This poignant, and apparently playful wit, is a more provoking, and occasionally a more powerful weapon, than even the invective of Brougham.—Brougham, too, can deal in irony, but his irony always goes so deep, that you are more disposed to dislike or to pity the object, than to laugh at him; while the most bitter things that are uttered by the Secretary, are uttered with such perfect good-nature, and in a manner altogether so gentleman-like, that none of that pity which "melts the soul to love" can ever be felt. Even Brougham himself, protected as he is by the impenetrable mail of his own gravity, and dangerous as it is to provoke him, lest he should fasten his iron claws upon the aggressor when he dreams not of it, Canning occasionally so completely foils or confounds by the very dexterous use of this lighter weapon, that he finds it expedient to bottle up his vengeance, and abide his time: no doubt, when that time comes, it is a time of bitter retribution for the Secretary; and what with the actual violence of the thrusts,

and the palpable, and it may be praiseworthy, sensibility of the Secretary, there have been times when he has been worked into a height of passion, and a forgetfulness not only of official but of Parliamentary decorum, which would have exposed an inferior man to a very reasonable share of condemnation. There is that, however, about Mr. Canning, which redeems all those little lapses, and which, in spite of that jealousy and persecution to which all truly great men, not firmly rooted in party or connexion, are exposed, renders every additional vigorous display of his oratory a higher step in the ladder of public usefulness and public approbation.

Those two Members of the Senate, and each of them must be admitted to be, in fact, the chief and the leader of his party, are remarkable instances of the triumph of their talent over not only the common attributes of illustrious ancestry, lofty connexion, and great wealth, but over a larger mass of gratuitous obloquy and party abuse than was, perhaps, ever discharged at men of the same abilities, and, were it any part of my vocation, I would say at once, of the same integrity and the same consistency. If the state of human society were immutable—if the same legislation and the same measure, whether of freedom or of restraint, were applicable to that society in all its stages,—an undeviating adherence to the very same set of prin-

ciples, and a constant recommendation of the same unvarying practices, would be the best of political consistency: but there is a gradual change among men; so that they who would so frame their politics as to promote the best interests of society, must adapt them to that change. It is not meant hence to be argued, that a politician should shift with every wind of the times, and adopt by turns the thousand opinions which various parties and individuals—from folly, from wisdom, from interest, from disinterestedness, from love of change, from desire of improvement—are continually propagating; because to do this would be to deprive himself both of the power and the means of correct judgment and proper action: but still, before a politician can cleave to that which is best, he must look abroad and see what alterations have been taking place in the general opinions and general practices of society. This, however, is a part of the subject (or, in as far as I am concerned, a part *not* of the subject) which it would be a work equally ungrateful and unavailing to discuss; for it would not be easy to convince those who have seen meet to attack either of the above-eminent persons, that they themselves have been in the wrong, and that that inconsistency, of which they complain so much, has been but a cloud of their vision, arising from a spot of cataract upon their own eyes. When a man has said or written

any thing angrily, it makes a very plain and palpable truth very hard to be demonstrated to his satisfaction, and

> "He that's convinced against his will,
> Is of his own opinion still."

Waiving then the condemning, as well as the plea of justification, of those by whom the thing has been done, it deserves to be stated as a curious fact, that the two individuals who are at the head of the two great parties in St. Stephen's, have been alike the victims of jealousy from their own parties, and of attack, not to say misrepresentation, from the opposite ones.

Brougham and Canning have, as I have hinted, both been the architects of their own fortunes; and, in their progress toward that elevation which they now hold, they have often been compelled to make the bricks of those buildings without straw. Each of them started as a literary man, and sought place—if, indeed, they did seek place, and place did not seek them,—not by fawning upon and bending to those in power—not by offering themselves in the humble capacity of hewers of wood or drawers of water to the political priests and Levites of the time, but by declaring, each in his particular path, that intellect was his idol,—an idol of which no consideration would make him forego the worship.

Canning, who came first into play, came at a time when the arrows of the adverse party, shot keen and pointed, were sticking all over the flesh of those in power; and it was because the juvenile sallies of this brilliant personage took away the smart of these, and turned the public attention to them, that he was first decidedly brought into notice. At that time it is plain that his own party, or rather the party which he assisted, knew nothing of the better substratum of his character which those glittering qualities concealed. They did not know that the man who was flapping the buzzing flies of pretended patriotism all over the world, had the flame of genuine liberty warmly cherished in his own breast,—they did not know that he who, in those days, contented himself with a smart epigram or a sparkling song, would be the man who should be, if not solely yet mainly, instrumental in bringing England out of that gall of bitterness into which untoward times and unfortunate connexions had plunged her. They did not know these things; and to those who looked coolly and closely into the subject, it was farther evident that they regarded the genius which they courted, as an instrument which would be somewhat dangerous in the use. There was, and it continued for a considerable time, a disposition to consider Mr. Canning as engaged rather than associated—as one

who was to be used, rather than one who was to be trusted: they saw and felt from the beginning, that he had an eye which would not be closed, and they felt upon a few occasions, and feared in many more, that he had a tongue which would not remain silent,—that, in short, his love of office, even supposing that he had that love, was not a love of the mere connexion or reward of office, but a love of the very highest honour that office can afford,—standing in the foremost place, and standing there in his own strength.

But while those feelings of inferiority, those little twitches of envy, which, though they embody the thing itself, are yet all too meek for assuming its name—those apprehensions lest he should stick a javelin in something which they considered very sacred, carry a light into some corner which they thought and which they wished to be perfectly snug, and clap the cap and bells upon something which they had felt disposed to venerate as the owl of wisdom itself,—while these, and many others which I need not mention, were behind the right honourable gentleman, quietly and cautiously stretching out their little hands, if not to pull him back, at least to keep him at the same easy jogging pace with themselves,—they upon the other side were hurling against his face every word of the vocabulary which was more harsh in sound and

more hateful in sense than another. As these dealers in the vocabulary knew less of the real character and the real talents of Mr. Canning than the others, and as their anger was up and the glory of their party at stake, they were, perhaps, less to be blamed; but still the whole political conduct of the man, as it has developed itself since he could act unfettered, might read to those who deal in political vituperation a very wholesome lesson of caution. The event has shown that the view which he took, if not so specious to rant and declaim about, has been taken in as profound a knowledge of the state of society, and with, to say the least of it, as advantageous a bearing upon the happiness of mankind. Furthermore, it turns out that the man who, if we had believed them, was ready to sacrifice every thing for office, and ready to do every work, provided he were paid for it, was more determined in his opinions and more sensitive in his honour than any of themselves; and even they need not be told that the man, who again and again goes out of office for the sake of his principles, stands far higher than those who, even for the sake of their principles, never could get in. If one were to concede the premises, and to admit that there is something corrupting in the very nature of office, and something pure and patriotic in the nature of opposition, then it follows, that a saint upon the

Treasury-benches is thrice as immaculate as a saint upon the other side of the House. If a man has never been in the way of temptation, nobody knows whether he could hold fast his integrity or not; but if he have so been, and so held fast, then the case is proved and the judgment is recorded.

That such is the situation of Mr. Canning, no man will deny; and every man must see, that, considering the jealousy and misrepresentation through which he has worked his way, nothing but the most undaunted spirit, and the most implicit confidence in his own strength, could have supported him. That he is either the most profound or the most laborious man of his time, nobody will assert; but it is long since England had, for any length of time, a Minister better calculated for winning the approbation of the people at home, or supporting the character of the nation in the general politics of the world. That he came into office at the time that he did, has been productive of no inconsiderable advantages; for, considering the then aspect of affairs, it is probable that, had England been too forward to declare herself on the side of either the one or the other of the then scowling parties, the energies which are now so pleasantly and so profitably employed in taking off the

shackles of commerce, might have been demanded for less agreeable avocations.

The part which Brougham has had to act, has not developed the same powers or put the same principles to the test, as have been shown and tried in the case of Canning; but he, too, has risen to the first place upon the side which he has chosen in the House, against much direct abuse on the one hand, and not a little coldness upon the other. His opponents have asserted, and his friends have dreaded, that the summit of his fame was won, and that he could not long support even the height to which he had arrived: but he continues to rise; even with the disadvantage of a most laborious profession, and a profession which, in general, is not supposed to be over-favourable to the more generous principles of human nature, or to the higher departments of eloquence.

Indeed, whether you look at the one or at the other, you arrive at this very agreeable conclusion,—that the time when the highest offices—highest in point of difficulty—in England, would be filled by those who depended upon connexion rather than ability, has gone by,—or at least, that if the nominal office may be still so held, the real and efficient service devolves upon those who are the best qualified for doing it.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE HOUSE OF COMMONS 8.

"That this House do now adjourn?—As many as are of that opinion, say *aye*; those of a contrary opinion, say *no*.—Say *aye*.—Say *no*.—I think the *ayes* have it."

THE SPEAKER.

EVEN after the vehemence and force that preceded it, you are compelled to listen to the Secretary; and the more so, perhaps, on account of the great contrast which he forms to him, the edge of whose eloquence he has to turn. Even here there is a frankness and a candour, which either you did not perceive, or which did not exist in the other.—There is a ready admission, or even an admiration, of the powers of his antagonist. He who feels that his own talents are the foundation of his strength, is the best able to appreciate and the most forward to respect talent in others; and, if you have a turn for such observation, you may perhaps observe, or fancy you observe, the indication of a lingering wish, something like "would that he too were on our

part." But the small and the smitten ones had, during the danger, looked toward the Secretary for protection, and he must cover them with his shining shield. He does this, however, not so much by disproving what has been advanced on the other side, as by winning your admiration for himself. What he says is so classical in its structure, so melodious in its sound, and so spangled over with the choicest wit, that you have little disposition, and not much time, to think of the material of which it is composed. Whatever may happen to be your own political opinions, you cannot help feeling the glow of satisfaction and pleasure that runs through the whole House; and if your self-possession be not all the greater, it is probable, that while the rolls of reiterated cheering follow the eloquent Secretary, you may detect a solitary "hear!" dropping from your own lips.

The display of such choice eloquence, and the invigorating influence of so much manliness and spirit, come upon the House like the breathing upon the dry bones in the valley of poetic vision; a soul is created within the thickest ribs, thought begins to germinate in the most unproductive heads, and those mouths which upon ordinary occasions content themselves with the more every-day function of taking in, now show unusual symptoms of giving out. The Secretary has barely resumed his

seat, ere a hundred heads are nodding above the opposite benches; but the signal has been given, the question-men have come to their posts, the anxious speakers have no alternative but to deliver themselves in a dream—or, which is the same thing, dream that they deliver themselves. The (clamour you would call it, if it were not a Parliamentary, and therefore a constitutional sound) determination to hear no more new argument upon the question (and upon the part of some that is paramount to hearing no argument at all—there being members present now, and crying lustily for the question, whom you did not observe when it was enunciated, or while it was discussed), is loud and persevering,—so loud and so persevering, that the Speaker, finding that his solemn call to order is not heard, leaves the vociferation of one to stun that of another.

When the whole corps of volunteers has been routed, the veteran by whom the original attack was led on, returns to the charge; and, as his right to reply is a right which not even the desire of supper is allowed to interfere with, he stands for a few minutes in silent command of the tranquillized House. After a few handsomely formed but harshly delivered sentences, he sees meet to withdraw his motion without a division; and the arduous fight, which is thus apt to strike you as very much re-

sembling a sham one, ends in a *feu de joie* of general peace. The cheer is deafening in sound and explosive in efficiency; for the thronging members could not leave the House with greater rapidity, although they were actually discharged from the cannon's mouth. The evacuation of the Gallery is as rapid and as complete: and thus ends the field day in St. Stephen's. You are apt to retire among the rest: but being anxious to see it all, you linger in the lobby; and as the door-keepers show no symptoms either of shutting the portals or quitting their charges, you ask whether the business of the House be over, and are astonished at being told that it is not yet begun, notwithstanding all that you have witnessed and heard.

Upon this you return; and as you again approach the Gallery-door, you hear a muttering of voices within the House. You enter; but it is difficult to bring yourself to a belief that it is the same place. That which was erewhile so tumultuous is now so calm and so quiet, and that which was so wedged with an anxious crowd is now so empty, or so very nearly empty, that it is long before you can bring yourself to believe that the real business of the nation is going on—that those few peaceable personages are engaged in discussing and settling that which is really of much more consequence than the stock-question, which called forth so much and

so splendid eloquence; I say the "stock-question," because it struck me, and if you had wondered with as much patient delight at the eloquence of Parliament as I have done, it must have struck you, that many questions are, or at least very recently were, brought forward, not with any hope or even any intention of being carried, but merely to enable the more splendid-speaking men to make proclamation of their creed and their capacity: and I have heard Tories thunder away against all manner of change, and Whigs against the influence of the Crown and the corruption of the Minister, just as some parsons, when the wells of sermonizing begin to run a little dry, let fly at his Satanic Majesty,—not because they have any personal malice or hatred toward the devil, or even a thorough abhorrence of all his works; but merely because in the mean time they knew not exactly what else to say. Those stock-questions come into fashion under a peculiar state of the political atmosphere—that state when it is neither too stormy nor too calm, but when it is changing from the former to the latter. When there is a real storm, those noisy spirits can ride upon and direct it: but they have too much ardour for the quietude of ordinary business; and so when they see matters verging to that, they try to raise anew the tempests which they labour to direct. Like the shrine-makers

of Ephesus, they dread lest the gain of their craft should depart from them; and so they go about puffing with their bellows, and clinking with their hammers, in order that, if they be unemployed, they shall not be forgotten.

When you again enter, the stock-question and the hammermen have all vanished; and the latter are probably fighting over again, in White's or in Brooks's, the battles of the night, while their thronging audience have gone to their clubs and coteries. You now take your seat in whatever part of the Gallery you please, and though there be no remarkable elevation of voice—though the speakers now be addressing each other, rather than discharging themselves at the newspapers, you can distinctly hear every word that is spoken; and really, if you be more a lover and a judge of sense than of sound, you will haply be more edified, though doubtless not so much delighted, with the tranquil work, than you were with the noisy play.

That man of plain but pleasing aspect, whose very look is persuasion, upon whose features there sits a continual watchman to unravel every thing like either guile or obscurity, whose eye is so clear and so soft, that you would at once pronounce that he never was angry in his life, and who seems so anxious that every word should be perfectly understood by all who hear him, is the Chancellor of

the Exchequer; and that harsh and arrogant personage upon the other hand of the Speaker, who is conducting himself as if the whole were addressed to him, and to him alone, is Mr. Baring.

Close by the Chancellor you may observe the glorious Gothic head of his most profound coadjutor, Huskisson. It is a plain head, and small labour of the barber has been bestowed upon the outside. I know not whether Mr. Huskisson be a phrenologist; though I should rather imagine that he knows the whim and laughs at it: but certainly he seems to stand less in awe of phrenological criticism, than any member of the House, who could, if he chose, command sufficient pilosity for a screen; for his hair, instead of being tangled and terrible as a lion's mane, like that of the Honourable Christopher H. Hutchinson, or twined into lady-like ringlets like that of Mr. Lambton, is cropped as close as that of a ploughboy. This circumstance increases the size of his face, especially his forehead, and gives him, when the light does not fall so as to bring out the acute lines and wonderful indications of depth upon it, an air which you would be apt to call commonplace, if not heavy. Opposite to Mr. Huskisson appears the square and solid front of Joseph Hume, which, though it exceed that of Huskisson in breadth, and in the force with which the features come out, is far inferior in depth. Although from

Baring's manner and air you would conclude that the whole speech is addressed to him, yet Hume nods ever and anon, as much as though he said; "I taught or put you in mind of that." You can see at once that Hume is no conjuror in theoretical politics; but he is remarkable for a certain stern, steady, and useful commodity, which his countrymen call *gumption*, and for which Englishmen can be in no way remarkable, as they have not a name for it in their language.

You do not now see the Chancellor of the Exchequer to the greatest advantage; but still, from what you do see of him, you can form at least an approximate estimate of his character. Mild and prepossessing, candid and diffident, as he appears, soft and persuasive as is his voice, and simple and natural as is his style, you can at once discover that Mr. Robinson is a man of very great abilities and very great information, and that he uses these with a judgment which is not merely nice and delicate, but altogether admirable. If, however, you had the good fortune to hear him when his duty requires that he shall go into the whole principles and the whole details of British finance, I apprehend that you would be both more astonished and more delighted with his perfect candour and absolute clearness, than with the sounding periods of those who sacrifice the reason of the matter a

little to the rhetoric. If you had heard him when he made his first financial statement—when he first let the House and the public know the extent and the liberality of his views, most assuredly you would have accounted it an intellectual treat of the very choicest description. Previous to that display, he had been well respected as a man, and reckoned a clear and logical speaker; but it was not till that day that he took his station so high in the rank of enlightened and liberal statesmen. Political and physical circumstances conspired against him: his predecessor, though tolerably intelligible when one could hear him, was minute to absolute tediousness, so that you entirely lost the one part of his statement before you could get the other; while his voice was so feeble and his articulation so unmanageable, that he left you very frequently to your own guesses. By these means, financial statements, which are but dry and arithmetical matters at the best, were rendered altogether unpalatable, unless to a few official calculators upon the one side of the House, and a few men of multiplication upon the other. There was thus nothing in the subject itself with which the new Chancellor had to grapple, that was at all calculated to prepossess the wisdom of Parliament in his favour. On the other hand, the whole—what shall I call it?—of the Opposition stood open mouthed to devour the inex-

perienced servant of the public. Hume looked absolute bronze, with a face as solemn and as still as though it had been the *abacus* of an ancient astrologer, ready powdered with sand for drawing a horoscope and casting the nativity, not of a common finance minister, but of Euclid or Archimedes himself. Baring put on an expression, for which there is not an adequate name either in English or in any other single language, but at which some may haply guess, when I say "*Ille* girn*avit atrox*." Tierney exhibited that causticity of visage which is peculiar to himself;

> "And did not spare to show his piques
> Against th' haranguer's politics,
> With smart remarks of leering faces,
> And annotations of grimaces."

Ricardo (for the House had not lost Ricardo then) looked as sharp as a needle; and indeed there was not upon the Opposition benches a man who knew all or any of the common rules of arithmetic, that did not, by some indication or other, give evidence that the new Chancellor would be foiled either by his own modesty or by the difficulty of the subject, and that thus a new gap would be made in the Ministry, which it was not absolutely impossible one after their ways might be nominated to fill up. In addition to this adversity of succession and of opposition, the Chancellor had to struggle with

something which was far more severe,—his health was exceedingly delicate, and he appeared so to have laboured at bringing his varied and voluminous materials into the compass of an intelligible speech, as that he had no strength remaining for the utterance of it.

Still, weak and exhausted, watched and winked at, as he was, he shrunk not from his duty; but after some prefatory sentences, admirably calculated for winning attention and disarming opposition, he began his statement; and that statement was so firmly founded in principles which no man could dislike, put together with such exquisite and yet so modest skill, and exhibited in so very unpretending a manner, that though exhaustion forced him to pause in the middle of it, it procured one of the proudest and most complete triumphs that ever clearness and candour won in the Senate-house. Tierney let down all the sarcastic angularities of his visage, and, shrewd calculator as he is himself, leaned forward to listen, and smiled approbation:—such effect does talent produce upon talent, however party or accident may separate the speaker and the spectator! Hume was overwhelmed with wonder, and fumbled in vain among his own bundle of papers for any thing analogous to that which he was hearing. Even Baring seemed pleased; and that, with the subsequent exhibitions

of the same nature, have induced him, and those who, like him, are deep-read in the mysteries of old Cocker, to be somewhat more civil in their looks, and a good deal more guarded in their language.

Mr. Baring, whom you find catechising Mr. Robinson, or making a commentary upon his speech much in the way and to the purpose of the "Commentators," is an acute and firm, though by no means a gainly personage. Mr. Baring is highly interesting to you, inasmuch as he is not only the chief and representative, but the express image, of a very numerous and very important class of persons—British merchants—those men who, residing chiefly in one country, yet influence by their direct interferences, and still more by the consequences of their commercial transactions, the whole, or nearly the whole public transactions of the civilized world. Mr. Baring is a merchant; and instead of fearing or scorning to confess as much in Parliament, he avows it with a manliness that does him honour, though sometimes with an arrogance by which that honour is a little stained. Having the whole of the Ready Reckoner and the Universal Cambist, together with the Custom-house Tariff and Price Current of all nations at his finger ends, he in one instant lays his finger upon the very item which he wants; and while he is thus perfect in the knowledge, and ready in the management of details, he

is by no means deficient in at least one department of general principles. About the intellectual part of politics—that which calls forth the finer faculties of the human head, and touches the sweeter strings of the human heart—Mr. Baring seems to know and to care very little; and perhaps, although it be true that commerce has been, and is, the great civilizer and smoother of society, it may also be true, and I rather think it is true, that it has a tendency to blunt, in the man who gives up to it all his time and all his soul, not only his own feelings, but his regard for the feelings of others. The habitual practice of valuing every thing—of putting its weight in the scales and its worth in the Day-book, naturally brings the devoted merchant to disregard all those qualities, both of things and of men, of which the weight cannot be physically ascertained and the value numerically taken. Upon this theory one may explain all the perfections, and also all the imperfections, of Mr. Baring's character. No man in the House of Commons knows better the value of money, and how and where that money ought to be laid out—no man is a better bargainer, as it were; but at the same time he seems incapable of appreciating those more sublime principles, to which men of more elevated minds, more lively imaginations, and more ardent passions, will always reckon the practice of commerce to be inferior.—

There is a something, too, in the air and manner of Mr. Baring, which puts you very much in mind of a successful trader, when he is in the act of doffing the plebeian and hoping to put on the Peer—of a West-end emigrant, when he is remembering to forget "Change-alley" and "Capel-court." At least you find or fancy about him, the budding germs of an aristocracy, which is not the aristocracy of mere wealth, and which shows all the freshness of that which is newly from the irons.

Mr. Huskisson, who, with a very careless and clumsy air, rises to say a few words in reply to Mr. Baring, is altogether the most difficult character to manage in the whole House. There is nothing in his appearance, his manner, or his speaking, upon which you can hitch even the lightest descriptive figure; and if it were possible to disembody sheer political intellect, and leave it without any of the trappings of ornament, that would be the nearest approach to a likeness of this most plain but profound member of St. Stephen's. Mr. Huskisson's bearing is remarkably shrewd and firm; and though he deals not much either in irony or in declamation —and the less that he deals in them the better—he occasionally sends forth a look, while some pretender is uttering a little truism with oracular gravity, which is more cutting and corrective than any commentary in words. He is very unassuming,

but with all so self-possessed and so decided, that you do not need to be told that he has examined, with the eye of a true philosopher, all the bearings of every subject that comes before the House. His voice is against him, for it is feeble without softness, and he gains nothing either by show or by fluency of language; but still the impression which he leaves upon your mind is, that he has more expansion and depth of intellect, and more range and inflexibility of purpose, than any man within the same walls. Brougham, notwithstanding all his power, is sometimes at fault; Canning errs in spite of all his elegance; Burdett (and it is a pity that you so seldom have a chance of hearing him) occasionally nods; and the clearness of Robinson occasionally, though very rarely, runs a little shallow; but Huskisson is ever the same, and when you think that he changes, he only goes deeper into the subject than you can see after him. There have, indeed, been some instances in which Huskisson himself, notwithstanding all his depth and all his caution, has contrived to render himself incomprehensible, and to show to the House and the public either that he did not understand the subject, or (rather) that he could not get the line of his politics to apply to it. I have heard him upon the Corn Laws, and perhaps upon one or two other points, endeavouring to ar-

true against principles which he admitted, upon the ground of expediency; but in these attempts he succeeded so ill, that he has as little temptation as he appears to have desire to follow any other than the straight forward course.

The routine, the roar, and the business, are over, and you come to the concluding scene of the great drama. The splendid men have retired, the men of business follow, and all that remain are a few sleepers upon the shorn field. Mr. Peter Moore and Mr. Fysshe Palmer now have their turn, and shine in the south-east like Castor and Pollux, while they hold high converse with some sages on the opposite benches, of whom you cannot learn even the names. The last leaf of autumn, the last flicker of an expiring taper, the last particle of dust cast over the remains of a dear and devoted friend—all the images of melancholy and desolation, which you can borrow or invent, have not power to paint out how sad this state of the House is, compared with the former ones. If the opening routine of private Bills had something the air of Parliamentary imbecility—if the storm of eloquence had the vigour and the daring of the prime of life—if business had the wily caution of old age,—this brings you in mind of the final stage,

"sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans every thing."

But relief from the painful contemplation ceases, the House is counted,—there are *not forty*,—the Speaker declares an adjournment,—and proclamation is made, "Who 'll home to supper?"

END OF VOL. I.

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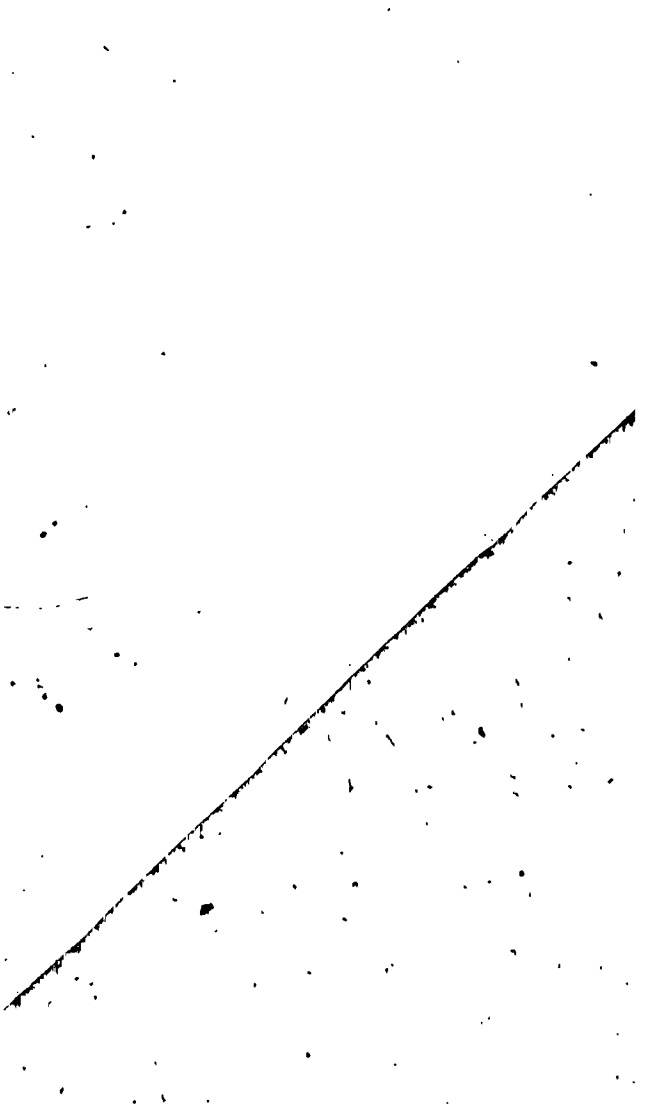

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